

Chapter 1 Mrs Vo and Mr Jingles

Oh how Mrs. Vo hated Mr. Jingles. It wasn't just taking him out for walks or having to clean up after his 'poopies'. No, it was his attitude.

Mr. Jingles was her son Edward's dog. It was one of those ugly little pug things all the teenage girls swooned over. Oh how she wished her son had wanted a cat instead.

'A cat, now that is a pet. Self-sufficient, adorable and they won't shag my six hundred and thirty-five pound leather purse,' Mrs Vo mused.

That damn dog was just too disrespectful and... cocky, strutting around like it owned the place.

Mrs. Vo gave a vindictive tug on that he-bitch's leash. "Damn dog," she cursed as it didn't so much as yelp as it was pulled back. It was a proud animal and Mrs. Vo believed that it took pleasure in staring smugly back at her.

"Maria, is that you?"

'Damn!' Mrs Vo mentally cried as she turned to see Mrs. Figg waddling along carrying an obscene number of cat food tins.

'It's like she's trying to rub it in my face,' Maria Vo mentally hissed.

"Arabella, what are you doing out here at such a late hour?" Vo simpered.

"Why hello, dear. Oh, Snowball has been ill for the past few days. I wanted to get him some treats to tempt him with," Mrs. Figg gushed.

'And here we go...' Vo mentally lamented as Mrs. Figg prattled on and on about her precious cats.

Even though Mrs. Vo would rather have a cat, she definitely did not want to hear about them, talk about them, or fuss over them as much as this woman did. Mrs. Vo decided to scrutinize the neighbour's

gardens as Mrs. Figg continued to gush about Flopsy's love of mittens.

'Crap...crap...needs watering...crap...too mundane...crap....crap...crap...oh! What's this?'

She gazed enraptured at the beautiful shrubbery and perfectly shimmering orchids of Number Four Privet Drive.

"Ahh, I see you noticed Harry's work," Mrs. Figg remarked proudly.

Mrs. Vo peered over at Mrs. Figg curiously. "The Potter boy?" she asked. Everyone within half a mile of Number Four Privet Drive had heard of 'the Harry Potter'.

He had become a neighbourhood myth that had spread from neighbour to neighbour. The family certainly tried to discourage this, but it was too little too late for that. His story had been the sort of tragic tale of lost potential that had captured the attention of every gossip starved busy body within ear shot.

At first, he was a rambunctious child who seemed to get into trouble at school, but was generally shy, and very quiet. Then at the tender age of eleven he was sent to a criminal institution year round. Petunia Dursley even confirmed it when confronted by worried parents.

Mrs. Vo herself forbade Edward to even be in that psychotic's presence. This led to quite the argument as her sweet Edward was part of Dudley Dursley's group of friends, Dudley being the cousin of the beast child.

It was also widely known that Harry Potter and Arabella Figg got along famously. Mrs. Figg was a decent woman who seemed to embody Little Whinging spectacularly; if not a little eccentrically. That Potter boy on the other hand was a hoodlum, a crazed psychopath who would probably mug you, and take your virtue without a second glance; if he wasn't closely monitored by the police, Mrs Vo and everyone else assumed.

And yet he created this...masterpiece. "Surely Petunia did most of the work," Vo stated reasonably.

"Petunia... garden?" Mrs. Figg asked as if Mrs. Vo was touched in the head.

"I forgot that you moved in after Harry came to live here. Petunia... Petunia couldn't even water a plastic fern, let alone a garden. You should have seen the property before Harry started working on it. It was like a war zone." Mrs. Figg whispered to a bemused Mrs. Vo.

"Surely you're joking. She goes on and on about how her roses," here Maria Vo pointed at the marvellous blooms for emphasis, "keep winning her awards. I've very clearly heard her brag about all the time she spends perfecting them."

Mrs. Figg developed a dark look, something that was very foreign to the kind woman who smelt a little of cabbage.

"You would do well to not take everything Petunia says very seriously, especially when Harry is involved. Not everything is always as it seems."

Mrs. Vo stuttered an affirmative as she was taken aback at the clear signs of ill-concealed rage directed at Petunia Dursley, and indirectly, herself.

An awkward silence fell as Mrs. Figg distracted herself by rifling through her handbag to conceal her attempts to calm herself.

Mrs. Vo on the other hand was desperately thinking up excuses to leave the Dursley's lawn and subsequently Mrs. Figg's presence, when she was distracted. Distracted by an inhuman roar that seemed to get louder and louder. The bellow seemed to be coming from Number Four itself.

It was a mix between a wounded eagle and enraged bear, and something else... horrifying that caused both women to clutch their throats defensively, as if to assure themselves that they were not capable of such a monstrous wale.

“BOY, stop this at once!”

“Vernon, what will the neighbours think?”

Mrs. Vo recognized the harsh accusing rasp of the second voice, and bellow of the first that clearly announced the Dursley elder’s presence.

‘What the hell is making that noise?’ Vo wondered. She remembered that Edward was out with his little friends. ‘Dudley and what’s his face polky...poultice...something with a pole in it; the rat-faced boy!’

‘That means the only boy that would be in this house would be ...’

“Harry.” Vo turned abruptly to Mrs. Figg as she whispered the name. Deathly pale, she only managed a worried glance in Mrs. Vo’s direction before sprinting away, whispering incoherently about how the “dumb doors would help.”

Mrs. Vo noticed a few neighbours leaning out their windows, looking curiously at the woman standing outside the house that seemed to shiver as the agonized wails vibrated off its walls.

Reddening slightly at the accusing stares, she pointed a well manicured thumb at the house, and shrugged as if asking whether this was normal. She received some sympathetic looks from a few friends, but more than a few scowls blaming her for the racket.

As Mrs. Vo was staring down a particularly indignant woman at Number Eight, she neglected to notice five distinct cracks between the house and her, or the displaced air that refracted the street light slightly, like when looking at a glass of water as it bent the image of a strait pencil a few degrees up. She did however hear and see the Dursley door whip open, and just as violently close after a few seconds.

A few seconds of intense heat and wind that rushed out of the open door, and pushed Mr. Jingles to the ends of his leash away from the house, and caused Mrs. Vo to cover her eyes for fear of the scalding

heat damaging her vision. Once the door was closed, the house went silent, but continued to quiver ominously.

Just as the neighbourhood was lulled into a false sense of security; the door opened to allow even more wind, roars, and heat to escape. The heat wave that escaped was at such a level that some of the grass wilted while the air wavered like a mirage.

Mrs. Vo would not know this but this was ideal, for the moving distortion that approached her. All Mrs. Vo saw was a blurry heat wave, instead of the distorted transparent caricature of a crudely drawn man.

The door closed but the heavily breathing dog walker noticed a faintly iridescent glow that lit under the door and through the curtains. She also noticed something else; she noticed that she wasn't alone.

She could feel herself being watched. Not by the neighbours but something else. Something dangerous, like being stalked by a predator, and she was some little furry animal, with a lame leg.

She shivered slightly, but dismissed it as the effect of the banshee call from within the house.

She was no coward and was about to drag a terrified Mr. Jingles to the door to ask whether everything was alright, that is until she noticed... the house had stopped quivering. The glow however had lost some of its warmth and inverted... it seemed to suck in light instead of expel it.

It gave Number Four a haunted appearance, something that no special effect could ever replicate. It made Mrs. Vo feel as if something truly special was lost.

Moments later, the silence that seemed to go on forever was interrupted by a sudden wave of chaos. The likes of which Mrs. Vo had never experienced before.

Mrs. Vo quickly lost consciousness as a force knocked her into the lawn opposite Number Four.

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She was awakened by a forty-something-year-old scruffy man who looked mildly attractive, not that Mrs. Vo would admit that to anyone (being a happily married woman), followed by a shorter figure who she thought might have had an accident with a dozen fireworks in his youth. He scowled as he tried to restrain the then frantic Mr. Jingles who had soiled the man's ancient prosthetic.

They would claim to be with law enforcement, investigating the blast, whipping out badges from thin air and vanishing them from eyesight just as quickly as they appeared. The walking disfigurement would leer at her with his one eye and comically large fake, questioning her suspiciously. Mrs. Vo experienced being hunted once again as he seemed to stare into her soul and find her lacking.

They would question her about the strangest things.

"What does a microwave do?"

"It microwaves?" she would say uncertainly

"What does that mean though?" He'd lean in suspiciously, as if he could smell her lies with that disfigured nose of his.

Mr. Lupin, the scruffy fellow who she would never admit to finding dashing, seemed to understand her plight as she did not completely understand the mechanics of a microwave herself. But he would nonetheless would allow his partner to interrogate her about everything mundane, everything except the explosion. It was as if they were trying to find out whether she had lived her life among other people who had experienced the joys of coffee machines and toasters.

They would eventually leave her be and allow her and a traumatized Mr. Jingles to return home. Well, after that scarred fellow waved a thin polished stick at the dog as if hoping to teach it new tricks as he murmured inaudible things.

'Maybe he was a drummer on the side' she would belatedly assume before cringing at the thought, as she reviewed the events of the night to her family.

Frankly neither seemed like they were cut from the same cloth, your everyday police men came from. For one thing, they were not in uniform, instead in slightly worn flowing robe like jackets and dress pants. As if they had popped out from the streets of Victorian London. For another, their questions were ludicrous, but who else could they be, for no one else had tried to contact her to get testimony for the events that had occurred that evening.

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The night Number Four Privet Drive suddenly lost its east wall, numerous windows, and somehow caused every car alarm for a city block to go off simultaneously was the night Mrs. Vo became an instant celebrity.

Most assumed it was a homemade bomb that got out of hand, perpetrated by Harry Potter himself. The child had the right kind of reputation for insanity and criminal behaviour to try such a thing.

"He was probably arrested," was many a satisfied answer. The Dursleys never denied this and seemed to encourage the rumour until it became a well known fact.

"Oh he will not be coming back. That is for certain!" an aggravated Vernon Dursley would mumble to himself frequently.

Mrs. Vo was assaulted many times by over eager acquaintances and strangers who yearned for the first hand account of what it was like to be closest to the blast.

Anyone who had the audacity to ask about what it was like would listen with rapt and often perverse attention as she detailed the horrible noises, the brief blinding light, and the scalding heat she felt momentarily before the shockwave that left her in tingles for weeks made contact with her body. It would be well into November before everyone would stop questioning her.

But she would never forget, for as everyone else hissed, “The mangy Potter child should be hanged,” or similar righteous threats siding with a distraught aunt, “Oh where did I go wrong?” Mrs. Vo would remember Mrs. Figg’s words religiously.

“You would do well to not take everything Petunia says very seriously, especially when Harry is involved Not everything is always as it seems.”

Those words struck a chord within her.

“Not everything is always as it seems.”

Mrs. Vo soon found excuses to be in Mrs. Figg’s presence more often if only to be around someone else who did not consider the Potter child filth. She would still be weary about him of course, but she would reserve her judgement of the lad until she actually interacted with him.

She did however feel it her duty to have Mr. Jingles use Petunia’s lovely rose bushes whenever he felt the need to go out side.

She would stop feeling guilty about Mr. Jingles’ daily visits when she finally saw Harry Potter again... plastered across television and news screens across the nation, if not the world.

Yes, Mr. Jingles would be getting a treat that day when Petunia cringed as she sniffed the repeatedly defiled bush.

How she loved that dog.

Authors Note: I’m new and this would be my first story. This First chapter does not tell you all that much about this story so I’ll try to fill in some information on what this will and will not be. This will not be slash. I have nothing against the gay community, but I do not enjoy reading or writing about main characters suddenly exhibiting a love for the same sex where none was. This will possibly be a Harry Luna Fic or no pairings whatsoever. This will be a post OotP story. This means Half blood prince did not happen. I will reserve the right to

include information or plot points from that story but it does not seem likely.

I do not have a beta 'Yet'. I am currently looking for one. If you are willing to Beta for me please let me know. Forgive me for any spelling or grammar until one is found. I'm not too concerned with Briticism(sp) but not to worry, I'm not going to have Harry suddenly travel to another country and comment on how 'cool' everything is in los angelus or have any big bad Mary Sues.

See Profile for more information if you're desperate.

Chapter 1 - Just enjoy it Lad

Earlier that day

'You won't beat me!'

Harry Potter was currently in an epic battle, continuing the fight of man vs. nature, and he was losing.

Blood oozed from his right index ring finger as he tried to grasp the tough wrinkled surface with razor sharp barbs protruding from its skin.

'You wanna play rough, do you?' Harry brandished the handle of his weapon and used the blade end to hack at the torso of his foe. Fluids smeared the metal as he tossed it aside into the soft mud.

'DIE.'

Harry planted his feet on a rock and using all the muscle he had gained from quidditch, which were mainly focused around his ass, pulled the beast from its den.

'HA! You can't beat the boy who lived.'

Harry raised the dying carcass up to the heavens in celebration. Revelling in his victory.

Harry was rewarded with one final slice from a stray spike, as the life slowly started to leave his former adversary. Its green body already starting to wither away at a slow pace.

"Ow, son of a..." Harry threw the weed he had spent a good half hour digging up on the ground and stomped on it like a two year old.

"...Bitch!"

"Harry! Language."

Harry turned to find an amused if not stern Mrs. Fig, making her way over to him.

“Sorry Mrs. Fig.” Harry would have reddened slightly if he weren’t already flushed from his heroic defeat of the ugly plant.

Mrs. Fig took pity on the amusing child and smiled warmly. “The lawn looks extraordinary. I’ve walked by this lawn for an entire year; an entire year of your aunt trying to keep this lawn from keeling over, and you’ve somehow restored it to perfection. You must be a wonder in the green houses. Good work.” She said in praise.

Harry fidgeted from the compliment. “Thanks Mrs. Fig, although I think I might have used some accidental magic on the lawn, I don’t think it would look this good after a week of my attention.” Harry refrained from telling her how much he hated herbology, gardening, and plants in general.

These were his chores to do and no matter how good he was at doing them, he would always despise every photosynthetic plant that crossed his path.

Harry noticed the setting sun starting to dissolve behind number seven. With its vanishing warmth came the now familiar chill that he had associated with Surrey this summer.

“You shouldn’t be out so late Mrs. Fig. It’s been getting dark faster than usual this year.” Harry stated trying to deflect Mrs. Fig’s attention back unto herself. If he were to be honest with himself, he was also worried for her, as she was the only person who had known him his whole life.

It had been one week exactly since he arrived back home but even he could feel the work of malevolent magic that had begun to claim the area. He had tried to warn the order but all the information he could glean was that they were looking into it. He did not want to see something happen to someone who he would probably call a childhood nanny.

“Oh not to worry dear, I’m quite careful... but I had to go” Here her eyes took on a troubled appearance and scanned the area. Harry perked up at the possibility that his eccentric neighbour may be in trouble. “It’s horrible Harry, Snowball has been getting feverish”

‘Should have known’ Harry thought sarcastically.

Harry didn’t know cats could get feverish. But he did not try to voice his thoughts; he just looked sympathetic and related to the batty women how unfortunate that was.

“I’m going to try to get a different brand of cat food; he doesn’t seem to have the appetite he once had.”

For the next ten minutes Harry tried his best not to tune the women out without her noticing, while she gave him a brief summary of her cats’ lives. Although Harry liked her, he did not share her fondness for the feline breed.

“Get in here boy... and stay away from that freak.” Aunt Petunia was Harry’s most unwelcome rescuer from Mrs. Fig’s tale about a kitten she had that loved mittens.

After last year’s dementor debacle, Mrs Fig had come to number four bearing Honey Dukes chocolates blathering on about how the ministry was going to the dogs. Needless to say the Dursleys soon figured out Mrs. Fig’s secret. They had forbid her from entering their property, and insulted her as viciously as they did Harry.

Mrs. Fig coloured slightly, but put forth a regal pose and haughtily addressed Harry.

“I’m sorry I must be going Harry. I do hope these muggle’s don’t ruin too much of your summer, God knows how insufferable they can be.” She didn’t even try to whisper her words as she clearly projected her voice.

Harry inwardly cheered Mrs. Fig on as she turned on her heel, away from an infuriated aunt, who could only glare frigidly at a strutting Mrs. Fig.

"I thought I told you to get in here Boy" His aunt whispered harshly. As she flounced off into her house. More in an attempt to hide her ire than out of any sense of urgency.

'Is it just me or is she starting to sound like Vernon more and more'

He had spent the whole week doing chores for his family with them goading him into calling the order. Harry couldn't bring himself to mail the order and tell them that his relatives were making him do chores... no matter how he tried to relay the abnormal amount and difficulty his chores entailed, he could not make it sound like he wasn't just complaining about washing the dishes. This had left his mind with nothing else to ponder but the last half hour of his godfather's life. At first it was still a sore subject but he was starting to reach a new stage in his grief.

He had however forced them to allow him to eat his fill. He would take his meals outside with him while he worked so that if his relatives had tried to take it away they would risk exposing they're questionable treatment to the many eavesdroppers of little whining. It was amusing to say the least when aunt petunia had come out side and snatched away his sandwich as he was watering the lawn, only to stutter at the shocked looks of Mrs. Flanigan.

Harry followed her in as she led him to the living room where a very angry Uncle Vernon was trying to pry fluff from his moustache.

"What is the meaning of this Boy?" Uncle Vernon scolded as he brandished a brochure like a sabre.

"I wouldn't know, I haven't read it yet?" Harry said quickly but tiredly

Harry had come to the realization long ago that trying to get his relatives to treat him normally would be futile; all he could take out of the experience was towing the fine line between disrespectful and violent. He really wanted to cross that line.

Vernon started to become red as was his nature to do when dealing with the ungrateful whelp. This was also one of the reasons for the

Dursley family (plus Harry) diet, they were on this summer. It was not so much for Dudley like the last one but for Vernon. He apparently had high blood pressure.

‘Who knew?’ Harry would sarcastically question himself.

Harry hadn’t actually seen his cousin very much lately. But each time he did he would admit to himself that he was disturbed by the pure hate directed in his direction. Harry had held out a meagre hope that his cousin might be just a little grateful that Harry had saved him from the dementor.

But no, if anything his cousin had reached a level of fury that Harry was certain Voldemort might have had trouble attaining. It was a little disconcerting though as Harry was the only person his cousin had expressed any emotion to; the rest of the time, Dudley’s face took on a defeated look that left Harry feeling sorry for him.

Harry was brought back to the Dursley living room by uncle Vernon turning an interesting shade violet. Vernon threw the brochure at his nephew yelling about mangy animals attacking him in his house delivering freak junk mail.

Harry decided to read the mail that had incensed his uncle so. Also he was curious what magical junk mail would look like.

Ministry Of Magic guide to Muggle defence.

As you are a relative, or significant other, of a magical being/squib, the ministry of magic has brought together the finest defensive minds within our jurisdiction to help you protect yourself.

Harry read over the list and scoffed at the Ministries lack lustre attempts at placating the masses. ‘How the hell are Muggle’s supposed to erect a Fidelius Charm around their property’

To be fair some of these suggestions were above average when applied to a magical family capable of doing magic. But someone like Hermione, who was the only witch, underage at that.

'I mean how is she suppose to prepare defensive shield rings for her family to wear.'

Harry's mental gears paused as he thought about his hyperactive friend.

'Actually, Hermione might have actually done that already.'

For any other subject Harry would chalk such a action to her overly studious nature... but this was a defensive subject, and ever since third year she had been in a fierce self imposed competition with Harry for top marks in defence.

She acted proud of Harry's natural skill, but Harry knew she was secretly irked that she was consistently beaten by her 'dimwitted friend.' Last year did not count as Harry was being targeted by the repulsive Toad. His constant goading and irritating ability to not submit to the amphibious women had not helped his marks any. Harry thought Sirius would have been proud.

"I will not have you parading your freakishness about as if this is your home! We tolerate you but you are not welcome here." This was said pointedly to make sure Harry understood his place amongst his 'family'.

Harry would not admit it but he was a little stung by his uncle's words. No, he did not have any love for his vile relatives, but they were still his relatives. Harry felt a throb in the back of his mind, and could feel whatever inhibitions he used to have around his relatives snap. Putting aside the cruel words from the crueller man, Harry decided to let his uncle know some interesting facts of life.

"Don't flatter yourself Dursley." The two adults were momentarily stunned by the acid that Harry said their family name with, not to mention his boldness.

"You will not talk to me..."

"Oh save your breath. If I could leave, do you think I would stay here with wastes of flesh like you?" Harry did not know where his words or

boldness was coming from but he felt the adrenaline rushing through his veins as he stalked around his fidgeting family as they shrunk back from their nephew. Their nephew with the emerald eyes that were turning slit like.

Harry could feel a wall crumbling feeding his lust for their fear... a primal urge to bath in their terror. He could feel himself, teetering on the brink of something foreign.

"I would never consider this... place, a home you vial little man" He felt like he had just taken a leap of a cliff, briefly enjoying the free fall into the unknown. He could feel a pulse chasing his falling self catching up with him.

'you're a wizard. You're better than these rats... show them their place... destroy them.' Harry started to reach out towards his uncles throat; hand outstretched and shimmering with a invisible fire.

His uncle took a terrified step back as even he could sense the hidden power his nephew's hands hid.

'What am I doing, I can't...' a small voice in the back of his mind argued. It was a familiar voice that was his... but stronger. It held resolve and indignance; it was judging... and always right.

'Show them who they have been tormenting... return their love' the other voice goaded... its voice turning into a hiss; almost laughing when it enunciated the word 'love'.

Harry's hand was half a foot from his uncle's throat and power visibly rippled of his appendages.

'So close...'

'...no'

'just a little closer...'

'No...'

‘And now he is ours...’

‘NO!’

Harry’s hand halted as it was about to make contact with his uncles throat. The hand pulled back and wavered before resolutely snapping from its claw shape to its more natural fist.

‘What was I about to do?!’

Harry looked at his relatives with the still cold snake eyes he had developed.

“You think the freaks from the train station were the only ones you would have to answer to. Wrong!” The other voice hissed through Harry’s lips...Harry may not have known where his brash murderous streak was coming from but he liked it. His head was swimming with thoughts of unleashing his will on these vile creatures. There was a minor throb that seemed to emanate from somewhere behind his head but it was ignored in favour of rattling the Dursley’s happy little world.

“One day I will be able to do magic, and I will always remember what you two have done to me.” Harry was satisfied with the rapidly paling faces and stutters.

He turned and stalked away while yelling “Pray that I’m merciful that day, Dursley.”

As he entered the kitchen, he slammed the door shut some how knowing it was locked by magic.

He was visibly trembling, with what he was not sure.

‘Breath; in and out, in and out.’ This was his new mantra. Moments earlier Harry felt as if his entire being would relish showering in the family’s blood. He could hear the other voice hiss in his ear for the screams of his only family while a more righteous voice demanded restraint. Now his mind was starting to come back to him, and the

hiss was fading, but the throbbing was getting closer. It started to become something tangible as his neck spasmed and arms cramped.

'Am I having a fit?' Harry wondered as he tried to lean against the table only to fall onto the hard stone tile.

Harry tried to get up but his arms and legs moved around of their own accord often injuring himself further by slamming a limb against a table leg or punching himself in the head.

'Oh no' Harry recognized the pain that coursed through his forehead. The scar beat to the same rhythm, his limbs seemed to follow.

His scar was pounding against his scull as he wondered whether Voldemort was doing something dastardly. Harry managed to roll over slightly, only to look at the trailing blood stains that lead up to his forehead. Looking at a lighting bolt imprint on the white tile he thought that the sight of blood was ‘not a good sign’. Then a feeling of being blown apart from somewhere within his very soul, confirmed his prophetic fear.

[illegible]

Colors washed over him in a storm of indigo and scarlet.

He could feel himself detach from his body to become something intangible, but also more.

It was hard to comprehend

Every sense was dulled but receiving information, he would normally not have been able to perceive.

Harry lazily wondered why he was seeing Dumbledore fighting a giant Lemon while he was being tugged into a gentle vortex above him beckoning him to swirl with all the pretty lights.

He was momentarily worried by the flash of fire that licked at his feet but was comforted when the vortex above him sent out many tiny but bright lights to defend him from the flame.

Each light felt like an old friend who was welcoming him home with a hug or pat on the back.

But then like most things in life, it wasn't meant to be. Harry belatedly realized his upward ascent was slowing down to a crawl and then full stop mere inches from the happily swirling lights. Harry could feel himself get sucked back down into a vacuum leading to the world where he could touch and feel again; but would never know the joys of being able to gently float for all eternity contemplating his fingernails.

Harry did not want to leave this imperious like state because for once he was not being ordered to do anything... he was being allowed to just be. No responsibilities, no worries, no expectations. It was bliss.

But Harry knew he did not belong here yet as he waved a sad goodbye to the lights. He let himself glide back down into his fleshy prison asking the question, "Did I get smaller?" as he just barely fit all his essence within his body.

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One moment Harry was looking at a bloody scar print, the next he was gasping for breath looking up at the dazed looking Tonks who was shimmering with the remnants of strong magic dancing across her skin.

That could be said about most everyone in the room actually, he observed scorch marks on the walls and the same dazed look and shimmer on all the humans, present.

Everyone, who included a tired looking Dumbledore, a distraught Remus, and a previously mentioned dazed metamorph, abruptly turned to look at the youth.

They all remained silent as they watched Harry unabashedly. It started to become quite awkward in Harry's opinion.

“... Hey guys, what’s going on?”

No sooner did the words leave his mouth before Remus pulled him into a bone breaking hug.

‘Moony, stop acting like a women, you’ll break my ribs’

Apparently this was said aloud. As the former professor let go and valiantly ignored the chuckles from the headmaster as he tried to make himself look presentable.

“Good evening Mr. Potter... my, I am not as spry as I once was. I hope you don’t mind if I test out your couch.” Dumbledore tiredly asked as he lazily plopped down into the love seat.

Harry was back in the living room. He felt slightly annoyed as he was dragged back into the room where he moments ago, escaped.

Harry looked over at where he assumed his aunt to be but found only air. Then he looked down and saw the two stiff figures of the Dursley’s, lying side by side on the red carpet. They appeared to be in some kind of magical bind. Harry decided to ignore the two as he couldn’t be brought to give a rats ass, and informed the Headmaster to make himself at home.

“Marshmallow Harry” Dumbledore asked. Harry was about to refuse once again the lemon flavoured candies before he realized what Dumbledore said. He was never one to refuse a marshmallow and thanked the headmaster. After grabbing a handful that were in a bag suspiciously similar to the one he carried his lemon drops in, a image of a giant lemon with a sword flashed before Harry’s vision, but he ignored the warning signs of insanity.

Harry was about to question the headmaster about the absence of his signature candy when he noticed the not so subtle shake of Remus's head as he stared pointedly at Dumbledore’s candy bag.

Harry got the message to not ask now. Instead he asked the question that was much more pressing.

“Tonks?”

“Hmm?”

“Why is my head on your crotch?”

Harry wasn't sure but he thought his old professor snorted before the metamorph slammed a pillow into his head.

“Enjoy it while you can lad.” Mad Eye Moody sagely added as he strolled through the entrance hall and proceeded to yell "Portus" at the V.C.R. remote as if it had insulted his mother. Harry noticed that the wall behind moody was missing and he could see the scattered remains of the dining room table hanging from a clothes line Still aflame.

‘now there has to be a story behind that...’ Harry mused as he shielded himself from the auror.

“It seems, Harry that we will have to move you earlier than usual. I believe that...”

What the headmaster was about to say was cut short by Mad Eye throwing the remote with a hastily added “catch” as warning.

Harry's seeker skills seemed to fail him as he was bonked on the forehead. He was whisked away by his navel taking with him a pillow happy, auror who was in mid swing.

Harry landed on a hard surface as he was hit again by the now red haired women.

“Stop hitting me Women!” Harry yelled between each fluffy hit.

“That's for... talking about... my crotch... around Dumbledore” every second word, Harry was smacked every which way by the crazed women.

“What's this about Harry and Tonks crotch?”

“Way to go mate, didn't know you had it in you.”

“Harry!”

“Tell us more about Tonky’s crot ... Ow, stop hitting me women!”

Harry felt the soft flesh of Tonks thighs disappear as she chose to enforce her brand of justice on a fleeing Fred. George on the other hand just laughed at his twin’s plight while

Ron tried to question Harry for more details.

“A metamorph... you dog!” Harry wondered how long it would take for Hermione to

“RON!” ‘Not even a second.’ Harry was inwardly impressed with Hermione, but slightly disappointed with his mental runtime.

Harry felt the back of his head and could feel the thick syrupy stew that was dinner drip of his matted hair.

“Great stew Mrs. Weasley” Harry complimented as he ate a carrot bit that he pulled from his hair.

‘Mad eye must be part seer’ Harry thought as he started to miss Tonks warm legs compared to the now ruined if not still delicious scalding meal.

“Thank you Harry dear” Mrs Weasley handed him a dish towel while simultaneously smacking Ron upside the head and trying to rescue her delinquent child from the now green haired women.

Harry felt a hand on his shoulder and looked up into the twinkling eyes of his headmaster.

“What do you say we adjourn to a less excitable room while the rest, sort themselves out?” The headmaster asked, far to amused for Harry’s liking. Harry wondered when the headmaster had entered but ignored the question incase Tonks refocused her vengeance on him once more.

Harry followed the aged wizard along out the entryway doors and paused to look around.

“Professor?”

“Yes Harry.”

“Where are we?” Harry looked down the long corridor that was similar to an apartment or condo with panels along the walls that cast soft white light down the corridors.”

“Ah, I was wondering when you would ask.” Dumbledore said proudly while looking at Harry for a reaction. “We Harry are in The Citadel”

“... what’s the citadel?” Dumbledore looked fairly disappointed at the reaction like his favourite toy was taken away.

“Why it’s the original Headquarters to the Order of the Phoenix of course.” The Headmaster continued. He seemed hopeful that Harry might finally realize where he was.

Harry looked around the well lit corridor and around a corner.

“Well it seems nicer than Grimauld place.” Was Harry’s reasonable answer.

Harry was certain he saw the headmaster pout before letting a determined look wash over his features.

“Come, I’ll show you to a window.”

They walked on for about a minute before they were met by what could only be described as a gigantic balcony, or observation deck stretching down four floors. Slanting outward to meet the window at the bottom was a paneled dome around the space.

“This is the view. As the name suggests it is mainly a decorative feature of the citadel.”

The glass paneled windows that seemed to be fogged over at the moment, while slightly ominous was not overly impressive to Harry. 'the view seems to be lacking.' Harry thought sarcastically, as he searched for something to view in 'The View'.

Dumbledore seemed to sense Harry's meagre awe.

"Let me disperse the blinds for you to see outside."

Dumbledore trotted over to where the paneled window met the rail and placed his finger on the glass as if he were to write a naughty limerick on the fogged mirror. Instead he quickly pulled his fingers back and allowed Harry to view the left over finger print.

Harry looked at the fingerprint and then at his headmaster as he waited for a reaction. Harry was about to say something when the mark quivered slightly before slowly expanding clearing away the mist in a circular sweep from one end of the dome to the other.

"Ok this is nice!" Harry admitted as he saw the scenic Scottish cove give way to a body of water that he assumed was keeping him from the mainland.

"I thought so" was Dumbledore's smug response as he looked over the scene.

From what Harry could tell, they were fairly high to get this wide a view.

"Are we in an office tower?" Harry asked in shocked realization.

"I suppose that would be what the muggle's would refer to it as. It is Built on a magical Node of course but, as are all the citadels." was Dumbledore's response as he continued to stair at a bird dive towards the beach.

"How many of these things do you have?" asked a bewildered Harry. As far as he knew a group of maybe a hundred, tops, order members could not possible use up even these four floors, let alone the rest that must be bellow... and definitely even more towers.

“What do you mean Harry? There are of course at least three on every continent. And one near every heavily populated area.” Dumbledore’s puzzled expression was quickly losing its novelty as he turned to question his pupil.

.”How did you get so many?” gaped Harry

“We built them of course?”

“But how did you pay for so many, and why?”

“With our funds, and to fight for the magical world of course.”

“You get funds?”

“Didn’t you read your guide Harry?” Dumbledore asked, exasperated with his student

“What Guide?” an equally exasperated Harry asked.

“Why your, Guide...to...”

Dumbledore paled slightly, and then he seemed to color in embarrassment “Oh...we will have to have a talk with Hagrid soon”

“Hagrid?” Harry was thrown off by his non-sequiter ramblings.

“Ill explain later but for now let me ask you...what do you know of the Order of the Phoenix”

Harry was trying to figure out where this was going but decided to allow the headmaster to guide the conversation.

“The Order...um, it’s a group of, I’m guessing maybe 50 to a hundred witches and wizards, I’ve only met a few, oh and there’s Mrs. Fig too. My parents used to be apart of it with Neville’s and some of the old crowd. You guys have been guarding things and trying to recruit new members.... Oh and you used to meet out of Sirius’s house, though I guess you used this tower before.”

Dumbledore blinked, then blinked again, and once more just for the hell of it. "So the only order members you know of are the Weasley parents, yours, Neville's, and a handful of other witches and wizards. And you thought we used to meet out of each other homes to fight the forces of darkness before I showed you the tower." Dumbledore started to smile as he was holding back a chuckle.

"Well when you put it like that, it sounds like your describing a very diverse P.T.A. but ya." Actually that is exactly what Harry thought it was all of last year and was why he was so very angry with Dumbledore. It seemed that he grabbed a few well meaning friends and well wishers, and gave them a fancy name and a cause. It particularly irked him that he was being bossed around by this group, telling him to let them handle the fighting when he did more to fight against Voldemort at the Age of one.

'I mean what could they do? Have Mrs. Weasley make dinner discussing all the snooping they did around work.' How Dumbledore convinced Snape to actually spy for them was a mystery to him. He was the only one who seemed to be fighting the war as loath as Harry was to admit it. Oh Harry did not trust snape. That gleeful bastard did nothing to help sirus.

Hermione had told him that "he probably didn't want to risk exposing himself. He is a spy after all."

Harry knew it was the reasonable answer but Harry could feel the giddy joy radiating off the potions master after the sad events of last year.

Dumbledore just couldn't hold in his hearty laugh at Harry's description any longer. "Oh my, you must have been very impressed by us then." Dumbledore laughed at his own quip.

Harry couldn't see why the headmaster was laughing but it left him feeling like he was out of the loop.

Harry waited with arms crossed for Dumbledore to regain his decorum.

"I'm sorry Harry but we assumed you would have known; I assume your friends thought the same."

"Knew what" Harry grumbled

"Harry, The Order of the phoenix is no mere vigilante group."

"Your not?" Harry asked sceptically.

"No you see Harry the Order of the Phoenix is a confederation of Magical Brethren Sanctioned Militia."

Harry stared blankly at the aged wizard waiting for him to use smaller words.

"We are the magical army Harry." Dumbledore added kindly to the now shocked teen.

"Oh... Well that makes more sense." Harry deadpanned.

"Yes I assume it would. You see Harry since the founding of the ministries the Order has been around to fight the big fights that threaten existence, from plagues, anomalies, and dark lords." The head master explained with his eyes twinkling along as if performing a jig.

"Since the defeat of Voldemort during the first war, the Order was dispersed according to its mandates and operating procedures; 'To prevent instances of petty use and abuse of the Order as an Army to fight small disputes for the local ministries'. That is a direct line from The Orders founding charter. While a wise decision, it does prevent us from acting quickly when a threat emerges until the reigning ministry acknowledges it."

"Oh, so because fudge admitted that Voldemort came back..."

"The Order came back! Yes I was certain we would eventually convince the minister but he was making it quite difficult."

“Anyway shall I show you to my conference room?” Dumbledore proceeded to guide Harry down some steps at the centre of the balconies that went down.

“Every third floor of the Citadel has a permanent healer station; they are responsible for moderate injuries. They also contain a portkey room that will transport all within to a hospital wing on the top Floor. The Area where you arrived were the designated suits where we hide refugees of conflict or Order Members, you will be staying in a suit 187 with Neville Longbottom and Ronald Weasley. They are similar to the dorms of Hogwarts as they have common rooms for your ...”

Harry started to tune the headmaster out. To tell the truth, Harry wasn't a details kind of guy. He would listen in to the important stuff but if there was nothing to shoot, he wasn't interested.

They passed a couple of people in black and grey coats who appeared to be scientists.

‘They probably study magic; are they still scientists then? Maybe they're called Magisists... no that's stupid. Never try to name anything.’ Harry was pulled out of his musings by professor Dumbledore holding open a door for him into what could only be described as a conference room.

There was a giant rosewood Table that could seat at least all the members of The DA minus Edgecomb on one side. It was oval shaped with one end cut off for the Head.

When Harry took a seat to the right of Dumbledore who decided to take a less dignified seat near the windows the portion of table directly in front of the two lowered down to their perfect height while panels opened up to reveal quills and ink.

“Now Harry I'm sure you have questions about this evenings happenings.”

“Ya”

Let me try to explain. Tom in the First War was known to the Order to perform rituals quite frequently in his attempts to gain immortality or power. We can track Ritual Magic's as it is so rare and powerful.

"K"

"He appears to have restarted his endeavours and this evening we detected a powerful if not distorted ritual being performed. What ritual, I can not say, but significant nonetheless. I believe your scar bled off the magic and channelled its effects into you.

"Alright"

"Did you feel or act differently before you passed out?"

Harry decided not to mention his need to bath in the Dursley's blood. "I felt more aggressive, and got in a fight with Uncle Vernon." Harry said vaguely.

"You didn't happen to exchange harsh words to the affect that neither you or your family wanted you in the house?" Dumbledore asked sadly.

"How did you know?" Harry asked, surprised.

"During the ritual, monitoring charms I have placed on your wards showed them being manually destroyed. Now from my understanding of the magic's at work; by vocalizing your wish to be away from them and having them agree, caused the wards to fail. Thus allowing the ritual magic to fully enter your being and cause you to sucomb to its effects."

Harry stared at his headmaster stunned. 'On the one hand this meant I have no reason to enter that house again, on the other I allowed Voldemort to...?'

"... What did the ritual do to me?" Harry could not remember anything after he passed out. Although his throat felt as if someone had taken shrapnel and rubbed it against his lungs,

“When I was contacted by a worried Mrs. Fig, we arrived to find you convulsing in the kitchen. You did not seem conscious but you were magically amplifying your voice as you screamed.” Dumbledore did not look at Harry as he said this. He had taken to standing facing the expansive window as the sun was finishing its sunset over the rolling hills and lake opposite the Views view. Harry could not see his face but did not need to see it to know he had a sorrowful look as he pondered his young charge.

“I seem to find myself needing to apologize to you again Harry. I had not anticipated the hostility you faced at your home.”

“Sir?”

“You see it was not exactly the words said but the emotion that charged them. Your family had to want you gone and you would have wanted it more than you wanted the protection afforded to you.”

He seemed to shudder as he exhaled.

“That kind of...” Dumbledore paused to choose his words carefully.

“...animosity, is not something I would wish on any family”

Harry was not comfortable with where this was going. “What did the ritual do?” Harry repeated emotionless. If he was honest with himself, he no longer blamed the headmaster for placing him in that place.

It seemed that with the responsibility Albus Dumbledore had as military leader, Headmaster, Wizengamont Mugwomp, and many other titles he had forced him to choose a suitable home for Harry or let other less savoury individuals choose after his power was relinquished. ‘The biggest threat at the time was and is again the death eaters, and a vengeful Dark lord. The Dursley’s offered protection, and being relatives, must have seemed ideal.’ Harry had forgiven the Headmaster, yes.

But he would never forget.

“Yes, of course.” The Headmaster turned around with a false cheery voice as he put on a mask of a kindly grandfather.

“As you had not reached your magical equilibrium yet, your body was not prepared for the forces being directed through your magical channels. As far as we could tell at the scene you were being charged with magic that was meant to demolish standard evolutionary blocks.”

Harry had no idea what the man was talking about. Although the phrase ‘demolish standard evolutionary blocks’ sounds like a good thing... no blocks mean less restrictions... less restrictions mean ...something good?’

“Because of this, you died.”

Harry did understand that though. He looked himself over as if he was looking for macabre signs that he had passed on.

An odd thought passed through his mind. ‘Am I a zombie?’

Of course Harry voiced his question more intelligently. “I don’t feel dead?”

Harry got the impression that the headmaster chose to phrase his sentence that way just to observe Harry panic.

“I’m sorry I should have rephrased that.” Those eyes twinkled back at him with amusement.

“We were able to resuscitate you moments later but for... 13 seconds you were not with us. You should also know that all magical deaths are detected by the ministry of magic and I would assume that the wizarding world is in uproar at the moment.”

Now Harry had to laugh at that. He could just imagine the headlines.

Boy Who Lived, Dead!

Defeater of He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named, found dead in kitchen. Possibly done in by a rusty egg beater.

The Headmaster shared a dignified snort with Harry before turning back to the subject at hand.

“This is actually a opportune moment for you Harry. While the ministry has detected your death. They can not detect your revival, you could disappear, Voldemort would believe this as well, we could smuggle you across borders and give you a new life, an anonymous life. Your friends would understand.”

Harry paused his laughter to look at his Headmaster in wonder. He could be normal, no more press, no more Voldemort, no more expectations. It sounded like heaven.

“But what about the prophecy?” Harry asked. This little fact nagged at him. Depriving his soul a choice at happiness.

“Harry, a prophecy is not a binding contract. If you so chose to, you could escape, and the prophecy would go unfulfilled. If this were to happen The Order could fight in your place. We could win as well, we just don’t have a prophecy to ensure our chances.”

Dumbledore looked at Harry almost pleadingly. Harry understood now that the headmaster for all his meddling in his life did not want Harry to face Voldemort to the death. The Headmaster wanted Harry to be happy.

‘I’ll do it’ Harry thought. But his mouth seemed to mangle his verbal cry to, “No thanks Headmaster.”

Both seemed stunned by his proclamation.

“Can I ask why Harry. So many would give anything for such a opportunity. Why would you choose to live by the prophecy?” he looked at Harry forlornly, with a glimmer of hope shining within his mind.

"I ...I just can't. I want to, I really do. ButVoldemort's my problem. He has taken too much from me to run away." Again Harry felt like words were being forced into his mouth again, but this time he knew he truly believed them. For all his faults, Harry Potter would not rest till Voldemort, died at his hands.

"Revenge is not a path I would advise Harry." Dumbledore pleaded. "It is one that leaves us empty and alone in the end. I myself have seen where the path can take us."

Harry could see his Headmaster seeking revenge. For all his kind and wise words, he was still a powerful wizard who had probably seen more death in his vast lifetime than the most hardened veteran.

"I don't see it as revenge sir. I see it as justice. Besides I wont turn my back if I know I'm capable of ending his ... influence."

The headmaster looked at Harry with unreadable eyes." We are more similar than I would care to admit Harry. Know that if you should want to escape, you need only ask. I will find a way."

Harry only nodded his head in understanding and gratitude; not trusting his voice to not quiver with emotion.

With a visible effort, the headmaster regained his composure and Harry sensed that the conversation had come to its end. Back was the kindly wizard, who many would only ever see. Back was the mask of a man who had more responsibility than even he could handle.

"Now that you know the important details of what brought us here there is only one thing left." Harry did not like that twinkle at all. No he did not care for it one bit.

Harry thought about what usually happens when he had to talk to the headmaster

'Usually I get hurt some how. Check'.

'He explains the background info. Check.'

'Then I spend the rest of the week in the...crap'

Harry turned pleading eyes to the Headmaster who smiled kindly if not mischievously.

"Yes Harry we must pay a visit to the hospital wing." This was said with such cheer that Harry almost believed it would be okay.

Almost.

AN: It is I Quazi Joe. Here is the first chapter in my story. I'm still waiting for my beta to finish editing but I decided to do a little editing myself... those of you who have read the story already can probably already see the additions and minor changes. Any criticism is still welcome as long as it's constructive. That means flames will be ignored. Since this is my first time writing I expect quite a few critics so don't be shy. Thanks to Necessary-Evil for his review. You all get a little bit of a taste of what's to come but trust me when I say this is no where near the main plot. I've left my summary so vague just so I can surprise you lot.

Well I think it will be a surprise at least. Oh I want to point to another author who used rituals to affect Harry through his link with Voldemort. Musings Of Apathy wrote Cracked Reservoir with something fairly similar to what I wrote. I thought I should post this to make sure he gets credit for his idea as well. And here I thought I was being all creative. It's a pretty good story, even if it's Harry/Ginny.

Don't expect me to post another chapter so quickly again... I just didn't feel like sitting on this for a week.

Joe

Chapter 2 – Hermy has issues

“Hey mate. Quite the entrance you made.”

Harry was unpacking his Trunk trying to find his wand. Remus had brought his things over after he and moody finished inspecting his neighbours to Moody's satisfaction.

Harry had received four separate warnings from the ministry of magic, from warnings of expulsion to imprisonment. Harry was a little worried until he read a note that came along via Fawkes telling him that the Order would take care of it.

He turned around at the greeting to find his friend leaning nonchalantly against his door, with an owl on his shoulder.

Harry tried to be just as nonchalant as he put away his underwear that he was holding.

‘Thank God that wasn't Hermione.’

“Well you know me, gotta be in the spotlight. I am Harry Potter after all” Harry said the last bit with as much dignity as he could. ‘Snape would be proud’ Harry thought with a smirk.

Ron snorted while walking forward and doing some form of manly handshake, that Harry thought he might have picked up from the eldest Weasley boys.

“Whose owl is that?” Harry asked as he observed the haughty avian. It looked slightly familiar.

“He's mine. You remember the owl Percy got the first summer you stayed over?”

Indeed this was the same owl as the studious prefects, and it acted like its owner too. Its obvious disdain for Ron was apparent as he did not act as dignified as his well mannered brother; this was exemplified as he scratched his under arms.

“Oh right, I remember now... why do you have Percy's owl”

“Oh once Fudge was proved wrong, he came back. Saying how he was ‘terribly sorry’, and would ‘try to make it up to us.’ “Ron said this vindictively but Harry could see the pleased look he tried to hide.

‘The Weaselys are once again whole. The Weaselys were definitely on the other end of the spectrum when compared to The Dursley's’ Harry thought wistfully.

Harry found it odd that Percy would admit he was wrong and crawl back to his family, but then again he was a Weasley. Family was very important to them.

“But that still doesn't answer why you have Percy's owl? Hermes Right?” Harry directed the question to the owl, as he was so used to talking with Hedwig. ‘Where is Hedwig?’

“Oh right, well he has been bending over backwards for the whole family, well minus the twins... but anyway, one day I just got fed up with Pig continuously zooming around my head.” Ron said bitterly... Harry thought there was something he was not saying but let him have his secrets.

“I ended up giving him to Ginny, It's practically hers anyway, she even got to name the stupid ball of fluff.”

Harry was a little angry with his friend as Pig had been a gift from Sirius. Harry brushed those thoughts away as he remembered the bird walking over his transfigurations essay after he had taken a dip in his ink well.

“Percy found out, and I think he took a shine to me because of the whole me being a prefect thing that he ended up giving me Hermy here for ‘school purposes’.”

Ron seemed quite fond of the owl even if it showed its affection by viciously tugging on a loose thread on his collar.

“Hermy?” Harry questioned.

“Oh it turns out that Hermy isn’t a he, but a she. Bit of a surprise really.” Ron explained.

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Hermione wasn’t having a good day.

She had tried to gain access to the Library only to find that they didn’t have one in the Tower.

They had books alright, Books on things that were not available anywhere else. Things that were deemed ground breaking or classified. ‘The things I could learn...’

‘But no, I don’t have “clearance.” ’

Hermione Jane Granger was a driven girl; she did not like to feel like she knew less than anyone else.

‘The only way to not be ignorant, and at someone else's mercy was to know more.’ Was her secret moto.

‘How am I supposed to succeed in this muggleborn hating world if I can’t learn? They’re probably pure bloods.’ She thought bitterly.

Before Hogwarts she did not spend nearly as much time in the library as she did on arrival. Some thought her just studious, but those some were wrong.

:~::~~::~~::~~::~~:::

Five years earlier

When she first got her letter her family were wondering what kind of joke this was.

“Maybe a new children’s theme park.” Was one suggestion

But soon they got over the hub bub of the letter. They lived their lives normally once more. The parents coming home from their practice to question Hermione about all the adventures her and her friends would go on. They were so proud of their little girl, such a popular child; all the children looked up to her. If they were the sort they might have thrown a coming out party, and no doubt their daughter would do spectacularly.

Hermione would go on and on about how Suzy from across the street got some new dolls, or Jessica, invited her and some friends over for a sleepover. Life was good for the Granger Family.

That is until August 1st. They truly had forgotten the letter and as such had not expected a visitor to come knocking on their door in a gaudy dress and brandishing a baton. Dan Granger momentarily remembered his days as a student at St. Lawrence's all Boys catholic school and took a position protecting his rear at the sight of the stick.

'She looks like Sister Margaret.' He mentally whimpered at the stern look the women had been directing at the man.

Most muggle families did not believe the letters sent out and as such a representative of the school was sent out as quickly as possible to convince the families that this was no scam. Often implementing time turners to meet each and every family and introduce them to their new world.

It had taken professor McGonagall a quick transformation into a cat and having Hermione recite her previous instances of accidental magic to convince the logical family.

After such they were given The Guide, and informed of the quirks of magical living.

All was going swimmingly in Minerva McGonagall opinion, but she knew she had to offer up the next bit of information or have the child mail her parents later with the startling news.

"I must inform you though, like the non magical or muggle worlds as it is referred to, there are prejudices in our own as well. We have as recently as a decade ago just exited a magical civil war."

McGonagall did not like the looks of apprehension that passed across both parents faces. She had seen many a child lost to her world because of that look.

"A civil war? How is it that the normal world did not notice" Jane Granger, Dentist by trade decided, she did not like the word muggle. It made her feel childish, and simple.

McGonagall decided to ignore the question as explaining the concept of memory charms never went well with a muggle.

"There are ancient prejudices that we are just starting to overcome. One of the primary ones in the magical world was the superiority of blood and lineage." At the confused looks that she had expected to receive she explained further trying to paint a picture as delicately as possible.

"The Pure blood's (those who could trace magic back two generations or more) believed, and some still do that Magic should be kept away from muggleborns. Muggleborn being the term for wizards or witches born to a muggle line. This is quite rare, but not rare enough to make them a minority. Your Hermione here is an example of such a case." She decided not to let on to the fact that a muggle was treated infinitely worse, as that would kill all prospects for Ms. Granger.

"You mean if Hermione were to enter the Magical world, she would be discriminated." Dan Granger definitely did not like where this was going. He had never actually experienced being discriminated, and he did not like the idea of his daughter living most of her life somewhere where she could be picked upon because of who her parents were.

He also held the fear that her daughter might assimilate some of those same beliefs and turn away from her family. He had caught on to what the Professor had not said.

"I assure you Mr. Granger, Hogwarts and the Magical Governments world wide do not condone or support such intolerances. I only mention it because it is more than likely that Hermione might actually experience it. Being a witch she will live to be over a century old and in that time she will experience many things."

Minerva McGonagall was told during her sorting she would do well in Slytherin house. She chose to be a Gryffindor for no other reason than at the time she liked red more than green. This did not mean though that she could not be manipulative.

Most meetings like these, the subject of the prejudices are what kept a child from entering the magic world. The Muggle born parents would however be quickly swayed when confronted with their child being able to live into the hundreds. She did not tell them that they would live that long regardless of performing magic, but let them draw their own conclusions.

"I get to live to be a hundred", a wide eyed little girl asked at the heels of her parents feat as she took in the information."

'Thank you Ms. Granger' The perfect way to divert attention was to try to convince the child about all the benefits of being a witch.

"Why yes, the Headmaster at our school is currently in his 120th year and acts far too much like the children he teaches. We have magical cures to many diseases that will prevent you from catching sick, and as a witch you will not be affected by some common muggle diseases that are actually quite fatal."

Now Minerva felt slightly guilty but did not let it divert her from her goal. Most assumed this mighty disease was cancer and their child would be free from its threat, it was in fact small pox but they did not need to know the disease they already vaccinated their child against was a non issue.

"Please Mum, Dad, can I."

Jane granger and Dan Granger didn't even have a chance. Their family would never be the same after that day.

They had taken Hermione at the insistence of the Professor to Diagon alley and invested a sizable fortune into a Bank run by ugly little gnome creatures.

Dan did not like the fact that Gringotts was a monopoly in the magical world or the fact that they offered very few services with out a fee. A monthly statement took 3 galleons a month, a trip to their account cost them 7 sicles per half hour plus a additional galleon for the attending goblin that was mandatory. And Dan definetly did not like the fact that for every 5 pounds of his hard earned money he only received 1 galleon.

'How do you calculate the magical vs 'muggle' currency value?' Dan and many other Muggles asked irritated at the teller who only sneered at the magicless farthers.

He found it odd that whatever calculations went into the ratio some how worked itself into a nice precise five pounds to one Galleon. 'Whats stopping them from making ever galleon 10 pounds... or a thousand.'

"Gringotts does not usually discuss its method of managing currency with customers Mr. Grangel." The little monster condescendingly stated.

"Granger!" That's the forth time he had had to correct this goblin on his name. 'I took the time and courtesy of memorizing yours you wrinkled little beast. At least mine doesn't sound like a two year old made it up. Gryffhook...bah!'

"Yes my apologies" 'doesn't sound sorry to me...'

Mr. Granger felt a tug at his coat sleeves. "Dad" Hermione held pleading eyes to her farther as she tried to keep him calm.

She was currently looking apprehensively at the irritating little creature and the grumbling witches and wizards waiting in line. Her face bright and anxious.

'Is she blushing?' Hermione had indeed begun to blush and apologised profusely to the little creature that only haughtily turned away and asked for the next customer.

'She's already embarrassed by us.' Dan Granger did not like the magical world one bit.

:~::~:

Preasent

'Maybe I can get Harry to let me see some of those books, if he asks Dumbledore I'm sure he can get them.' Hermione wasn't troubled by using her friendship with the unfortunate boy to get what she needed. If nothing else she thought she was helping him.

He was a pureblood but raised by muggles, he had influence, and he was sympathetic to Hermione. He looked to Hermione for answers, and she needed information to give him.

Hermione did like him as he had a charming personality and was quite endearing. She had not gone through her adventures with Harry Potter solely for her own purposes, but days like today when Hermione's mind like many before and soon to come, became side tracked by a perceived prejudice, letting them rule her life; she saw bigotry and prejudice around every corner, and she saw her friends as means to and end on days like today.

Hermione had dreams; she would become someone the purebloods would be forced to respect if she had to make them the inferiors of the magic world instead to do so. She had begged the Hat to go to Gryffindor once she had found out Harry Potter was to go to Hogwarts that year. He surely wouldn't go to Slytherin, and did not seem all too smart to go to Ravenclaw.

The hat was forced to let her go, as it was ultimately the Childs choice in the end. This is not to say she had some master plan to befriend Harry, but like she told him on the train, she had read all about him. If anyone could help her assimilate into the world of prejudice it was the hero.

Hermione made her way down to the suite Ron and Harry shared. 'Why did they get a sweet 187 when I only got a 182?' The suits were classified by numbers starting in numbers 100-200. The higher numbers offering more security features and amenities. She opened the door ignoring a startled Neville and marched over to Harry's room.

She was about to enter but she overheard Ron say something.

"Hermie... ya I love her." Ron gushed to Hermione's secret pleasure. She wasn't sure how she felt about the red head but his words were not unwelcome. Although she would have to have a talk with him about shortening her name. She only let Grawp call her that, and only because he could use her as a Barbie if he was so inclined to.

"Ya she is quite the looker, but I must say my little lady is much prettier, where is she anyway?"

'Jerk.' Harry was similar to Ron in the respect that she had considered them both as possible love interests. They had not flirted but she thought it was an unspoken truth that one of them should want to date her, if not fight over her. To have one of the boys she thought of as something more, criticize her looks in comparison to another girls...

...Hermione was not pleased with her friend. 'I hope its not that slag Cho' Hermione had not approved of the pureblood witch. She had come up with contingencies if she were to end up with Ron. 'Harry would marry a muggleborn girl. That way, it snidely thumbed the purebloods and Harry could have something in common with his bride to be.' She had rationalized.

She had purposefully scheduled the interview that day out of spite simply because he had shown none of the interest she had hoped he would in her. She did not really fancy him but it had taken a bite out of

her ego when he talked about Cho Chang in a daze. She was afraid Harry would say no but was prepared to guilt him saying that 'it was his duty to report to the world Voldemorts return, not go on a date'. Luckily, he had been clueless to the fact that you don't meet other women when you're on a date, especially on Valentines Day. He simply trusted her too much, and she had not left him much of a choice.

"Well I'll admit she is stunning, but I've grown quite attached to Hermy, even if she is kind of cold to me." Hermione did not know what to think of that, sure she was kind of snippety with him but 'he was so immature some times'. She felt a little ashamed of her behaviour letting her previous purebloods are out to get me mindset slide.

"I still can't believe she's a girl, she acts almost exactly like Percy too. So formal, and cold... kinda like malfoy"

'How dare he!' Hermione was outraged that her friend would insult her behind her back.

Apparently Neville had come to see what Hermione was listening to as well and realized what was going on.

"Oh Hermione it's not what it..."

"Hey dont compare my things to Malfoy... but don't worry mate, I took a peak down below when she wasn't looking to make sure. Definitely a girl." Ron said oblivious to the scandalized and afraid friends on the other side of the door.

Hermione saw red.

Neville could only stutter before doing the only sensible thing. He took a step away from the door as she charged.

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"...I took a peak down below when she wasn't looking to make sure. Definitely a girl."

Harry did not even get to question how he knew what female owl parts looked like in comparison to males. The door seemed to take exception to Ron's statement as it violently banged against the wall as it was slammed open to reveal an enraged Hermione with a wand pointed at a shocked red head.

"You filthy, perverse boy! I can't believe you would 'Take a Peak' at me, what did you do, steal Harry's cloak and watched me undress?"

The two long time male friends could only stare at Hermione in clear confusion and embarrassment as the women detailed a plan to watch her starker's.

"Hermione what are you talking about, I never did that?" The blush that was apparent on his cheeks relayed a different message.

"Don't lie to me! I heard you tell Harry all about how you checked to make sure I was a girl." Hermione ranted ignoring the puzzled but slowly comprehending faces.

"No Hermione, Ron wasn't talking about..." Harry tried to defend his friend from what could possibly be mortal peril but was forced to flinch as Hermione pointed her wand at Harry instead.

"And you, talking about me behind my back. I thought we were friends!" She did not act sad; she was angry and picking up steam.

Harry and Ron would remember this moment as the one that truly showed why Neville became a Gryffindor.

As Hermione continued to rant at the two, their room mate resigned himself to sneak behind the witch and positioned himself before performing something that could possibly have been suicidal.

He lunged at Hermione and wrestled her for her wand. The witch did not really fight as she had dismissed Neville long ago as someone who would not cross her.

"Neville. I see your siding with them swell." 'This is some Pureblood thing isn't it?'

“Hermione you’ve got it all wrong. They weren’t talking about ...”
Neville was interrupted as he handed the wand to Ron.

“Oh I heard them, they were talking about ...”

Harry decided he had to head his friend off before she went any further.

“Hermione, meet Hermy... Hermy, Hermione!” Harry Dragged a ruffled Owl who was currently trying to fly away from the mongrel child who was holding her by her talons.

“What, that’s Hermes, he’s Percy’s owl.” ‘Why do they have Percy’s owl?’

“Actually Hermione that’s what we’ve been trying to tell you. He is apparently a she.”

No one said anything as Hermione let a look of understanding and then mortification cross her face.

:~::~:

“You see Hermione around?”

“No” was the quick response from the three males as they averted their eyes from the Weasley female.

She raised an eyebrow at their synchronized answer, but let it be as she could question her friend later in her suite.

The teens were all lounging around the dinner table as Neville and Harry played black jack with an aggravated Ron.

“Stupid muggle game. Lets play chess Harry, you can be white!”

“I don’t know I kind of like this game.” Neville apparently had a thing with numbers. Harry wondered whether he was one of those types who could count cards.

“Stupid muggle game. Stupid math” Ron continued to grumble as Harry tried to decide whether he wanted another card.

“Hit me”

“Ok”

SMACK

“Ow. Not literally Luna!” Luna was the dealer this round and had actually taught the two boys on either side of Harry how to play. Harry having some knowledge of the proper phrases was not much help as they used the magical deck.

Neville and Luna along with their families were moved to the citadel a day after they arrived home. They were high targets because of the Ministry Fiasco. Well them and a couple other random families. The Grangers had jumped at the chance to spend their vacation with their daughter in a magical building. They had been drifting apart since Hermione had been indoctrinated into the world of fables and myth. Harry got to know the two but was slightly disheartened when they did not know who he was. Ron was the same. Apparently Hermione did not talk about them with her family. To be fair Hermione just simply did not talk with her family in general. Dan Grangers fears were coming true.

“Well then why did you tell me to?” She peered over the table at the messy haired teen with suspicion.

“You don’t have head wumps do you? They are quite dangerous; they say that’s where we learned how to use the imperious curse.” Luna ignored the sniggers of Ginny and amused smiles of Neville and Ron as she leaned over the table and put her hand on Harry’s cheek and used her thumb to lower his eyelids and push his nose about like silly putty.

Harry colored spectacularly under the touch but was saved by Hermione’s entrance.

"There are no such things as Head Wumps Luna" She added tiredly as she sat opposite

Ron at the circular table they were playing on. She purposefully avoided looking at the boys. They had come to the unspoken agreement to not discuss the misunderstanding that occurred days earlier or the creative use of Harry's invisibility cloak to snoop the girl's bath and bed rooms.

Harry tried to squash the part of him that had been interested in that idea but had come to the conclusion that Dumbledore was not stupid enough to give a pre-pubescent boy a way to go unnoticed with out being able to punish him for misuse. Even if it were his fathers.

'Although I wonder if my dad... bad line of though, bad line of thought' Harry did not like the possible implications about how his farther spent his times with that cloak. He decided he might need to look into cleaning charms.

"That's what the muggles say about witches and wizards to" Luna sing songed to the exasperated girl.

"She's got you there Hermione. You never know" Neville added mystically.

Hermione just ignored her friends, mumbling "boys," as she took out a book she had managed to get from Remus.

The Citadel was a pleasant change from Grimauld place. Like being at Hogwarts with out homework. Harry only wished he could leave. He did not like being confined anyplace and they were definitely being confined as he had woken up to find auror Body guards following them around.

"You kids are dull. Why won't you go out... anywhere?" This came from Tonks as she was their lucky chaperone today.

'Not what I expected my minders to suggest' Harry thought in confusion.

"I Beg Of You To" she pleaded. Apparently the Young Guard was just as antsy as the rest of them.

The other fellow beside her just looked on stonily. Apparently most Guards were supposed to act like the Guards at Buckingham palace. Luna had a lot of fun with Ginny's lipstick at the encouragement from a cheering metamorph, who gave tips as the man just stood their, occasionally twitching.

"Yes! What do you guys wanna do?" Ron cheered. "Diagon alley?"

"No, its no fun really, I do need to pick up some money but there is nothing to do their." Harry shot down that idea.

He had spent a entire summer in Diagon alley and if he could go anywhere he wanted this summer he was not going to waste it going to quality quiditch with Ron or Flourish and Blots with Hermione. For once he wanted to do something other than window shop or contemplate the seedy nature of knocturn alley.

"Are their, any other places to go?" Hermione questioned

"Hogsmead?" Ron asked slightly disappointed that his idea was shot down.

"No, we can do that any time at Hogwarts." Hermione said

"Well what do you usually do for fun?" Neville questioned.

"Why don't we go to the village down the road?" Luna said as she shuffled her deck. She was perplexed as she seemed to continuously get the King and Queen of hearts and a shifty looking Joker card at the bottom of the deck all the time. She did not think her divinations deck would giver her so much trouble.

"There is no magical village down the road Luna" Hermione explained to the girl condescendingly.

Luna turned an irritated eye to Hermione as she paused her shuffle to glare at the witch before returning to her zoned out appearance while stating "I never said it was magical."

"A Muggle Village. I've never been to one of those." Neville stated curiously.

"Brilliant Luna!" Harry was very interested in this. He may have been muggle raised but he had never experienced any of the muggle world outside his school and home.

Amongst all the agreements, Hermione seemed the most vocal against going. Harry wasn't sure whether it was because it was Luna's idea (she had taken a particular dislike to the girl) or whether it was because it was muggle. Harry wasn't stupid, he was actually pretty observant, most of the time that is, he was just easily swayed. Like Neville he had little confidence and did care what others thought about him. It was one of the things that made him like every other teenager in the world.

He had slowly come to realize for all Hermione's talk about prejudiced wizards and witches against muggleborns; she was ashamed of her background. Harry did not know his epiphany so closely mirrored Dan Grangers fear five years earlier.

:~::~~::~~::~~::~~:::

They eventually convinced Hermione to go but Ginny had to stay as she was grounded. She had not done well on her transfigurations final and tried to hide it from her parents. Unfortunately being surrounded by Order Members who were also your teachers did not help her lie.

They made their way down to the village which they could not catch the name of. It was a little hamlet. Quaint with a lot of attractions, being so close to the coast had made this an ideal if not secret tourist attraction. It was not a backwards community either; they had all the amenities a bunch of friends could want. Cinemas, bakeries, arcades, and dozens of other attractions littered the town. Although Neville and

Ron were more enticed by the string Bikinis currently worn by a group of giggling girls.

Harry was more used to it as he had seen snippets of such things in magazines and commercials Dudley had taken to watching or ogling.

That's not to say Harry had not taken a gander but he did not go slack jawed like his two roommates... much.

Curiously Hermione and Luna did not want to stay on the beach, much to the disappointment of the boys.

"Well what do you guys want to do first?" Hermione asked tersely.

"Hmm... what you say Hermione?" Ron reluctantly turned away from a pretty red head who winked at him saucily before giggle madly with her friends at his blush.

"Honestly!" Hermione was not getting any happier at this.

Harry tried to share an amused smile with Luna but found her staring frigidly at the brunette who had winked at him across the street. The very busty brunette wearing a skirt that was far too short to be considered clothing. Harry thought she might have a great 'personality' but decided it would be safer for the men of the group if he steered them away from the friendly women otherwise the not so friendly ones he currently hung around with would hurt them.

"Well we could go see a show." Harry said desperately and was rewarded when Hermione huffed her approval and Luna became dreamy again.

"Show?" Ron asked.

:~::~:

"Whoa"

"So you liked it then"

“Whoa”

“I’ll take that as a yes, what bout you Neville?” Harry asked as his pureblood pals continued to stair in wonder after the credits finished.

“Big dragon” Neville appeared shaken by the three year old movie that was doing a repeat performance.

“Dinosaur... not a dragon.”

“Its okay Neville. Dinosaurs aren’t real. My dad told me about the movies before, they’re fiction.” Surprisingly it was Luna telling Neville about what was make believe and what wasn’t.

“Actually Luna dinosaurs are real, Muggles discovered them along time ago.” Hermione seemed to enjoy telling the girl what was real a little too much in Harry opinion.

Luna turned a stunned eye to Harry for confirmation. “It’s true...” Hermione smiled smugly at the girl. Harry decided to help Luna out after witnessing her friend’s horrible behaviour.

“People thought those were myth for a while, but now we know they’re real. Just extinct.” Harry said idly trying to emphasize the words myth and real.

Harry wasn’t sure if it was true but decided to wing it. Luna smiled brilliantly at Harry’s support, recognizing his attempts at trying to cheer her up.

Harry scowled back at Hermione as she muttered about “encouraging the girl,” but was cheered that he guessed correctly as she had not tried to deny his statement.

“You guys want to go eat something.” Harry asked as Ron’s stomach growled ominously forewarning its need for sustenance. Ron just nodded as he was still stunned by the movie, occasionally muttering “whoa.”

Harry for the meal. Harry had treated his guards to 'Sloppy Burgers' and the movie as thanks for the day. Tonks was grateful and expressed it by jumping in Harry's lap and proclaiming him "a keeper" in front of a harassed waitress.

The other guard, who Harry decided to name Bob, did not react, but he seemed to be fonder of Harry as he shadowed the teens back to the tower. Harry almost thought he saw Bob smile but was forced to conclude it was a twitch from Luna poking his buttocks with a stick. Tonks hung back to admire the girls guts, and Bobs glutes.

They were currently gathered around a dinner table in the Weasley parents suits. Harry thought it must have been a bit like a vacation for the parents as their kids had their own suits and they had their own to themselves. Molly Weasley seemed more relaxed than he had ever seen her, and Mr Weasley guffawed loudly and frequently to the most miniscule jokes.

'I guess even she needs time away from the kids. This must be what its like for them when we are at school.'

Mr and Mrs. Granger were currently having a long conversation with the pair. Harry could hear Mrs Weasley gush about Hermione being such a charm to have around the house. Hermione did not seem as pleased with the conversation as the adults were.

Ginny was currently sulking as Luna told her farther about how Harry had treated her to lunch at the restaurant and how nice the guards were. She talked about Bob frequently.

Ginny sent envious looks towards Luna through most of the night while smiling at Harry frequently.

Harry felt the tell tale signs of warning signals being flagged as Ginny would gaze at him a little longer and longingly than was appropriate for a friend.

He used those moments to talk with Mr. Lovegood at the dinner table as he was going on about how the muggles were planning something to do with Asian Viper tongues in Singapore. He claimed that the

Muggle dignitaries were meeting in secret to create an army to defend the world from Demonic uprisings.

Harry thought Mr Lovegood was interesting. Luna just beamed as Harry asked "Do they speak parseltongue?"

AN: Hey all I thought I would explain Hermione's behaviour. Just to let you know there will be some Hermione Bashing in my story, I'm not totally sure how far I will take it but she is not going to be betraying Harry or anything. Their friendship will be strained however.

Now Hermione in this story is what I like to call a Racial Victim. This comes from personal experience with family and friends I've had. A Racial Victim to me is not someone who was discriminated but was someone who sees discrimination everywhere.

She is the type of person who would drive herself to perfection just to prove to everyone and make a statement that she is not inferior, 'don't mess with me'. In this story instead of actual race, its blood purity. Now I am not saying its wrong for her to try to prove herself, many people have done this in a positive way and brought great change to our society, a Racial Victim to me is someone who will jump the Gun and consider all disappointments and unfairness bigotry.

You don't get Top Marks. Teachers a Bigot.

You don't get the Job. Interviewer is a Bigot

You don't make more money than that guy. Bigots, the lot of em.

This is Hermione in my story. She is sneaky and manipulative and will be bashed as a result of this.

Now that that's taken care of.... you guys might have noticed some Harry/Luna action going on. I'm just laying the ground work, but I'm still not sure whether to use it.

Any who... This Authors Note is getting long so I'll just finish off saying I still need a beta and Reviews make me happy.

Not a must but I won't be turning them away.

Joe

Chapter 3 – Birthdays, Muggles and Bob. Oh my!

“Harry get up... were under attack!”

Harry didn't even have time to comprehend the statement before his blankets were tossed aside by a rapidly moving Ron.

“What's going on?!” Harry asked in alarm as he got up quickly.

“It's the Death eaters. They got my family, Neville, Hermione, Luna...” Harry instantly bolted upright and put on his glasses while Ron continued to name names. “Where?” Harry demanded.

“When I got away I heard them say they were taking them to the View... we gotta...” What Ron was about to tell Harry to do was interrupted by Harry as he bellowed.

“Chippy!”

POP

“You called master Harry Sir.” A slender female House Elf asked meekly.

“Take me to The View immediately.” There was no time to be polite, Harry had to act and fast before the death eaters left.

“Yes Master Harry Sir!” The little elf grabbed Harry's hand, and as soon as they touched, they were gone.

Ron Weasley stared at the spot his friend had been moments ago.

“Ah hell...” Ron moaned as he made a mad dash back up to the View. Earlier in the week.

Mrs. Weasley had been spending more time in the hospital wing as a number of healers there were currently called away to a magical black out zone. They had been cropping up more frequently over the last several years. Areas where magic seemed to turn off for random

intervals. They had been sent along with a group of unspeakables to test healing magic's apparent resilience to the phenomenon.

When Harry asked Ron why his mum was going to the hospital wing he was informed that she was a certified healer who had been laid off during the late 80's. Apparently ministry budget cut backs had cost many their Jobs in favour of creating the widely despised Dark force defence league. A group of wizards and witches that were to police the streets the Auroras once did. Leaving the highly trained wizards to protect the Ministry of Magic and its Minister, while leaving a few incompetents to cause more damage than good, and allow a previously shady area to become the now renowned un-policeable Knockturn Alley.

Mrs. Weasley informed them that she would not be able to make meals so she had the group go to the Main Cafeteria on the 18th floor. She had previously demanded a family meal which often included the Grangers, Lovegoods, Longbottoms and of course Harry.

The group descended The View to the crystal platform which helped transport people about the tower. Portkeying any who stand on them, to anywhere within the structure. Harry did not think using a portkey before he ate was a great idea but did not voice his concern.

Harry had expected the cafeteria to be some grand dinner hall like the great hall in Hogwarts. He was disappointed to find it was not wondrous at all.

Three or four dozen circular grey tables littered the large room with benches carrying forks, spoons and knives. On the far right to where Harry and the group entered was a dozen long rectangular benches with serving trays and about four or five chefs hats that walked behind them as if being worn by a small child.

"Let's get in line Harry." Ron called as he quickly made his way to one of the benches with a moving chef's hat.

"Hello young Sir, What can Chippy be getting for you today?" a top hat said in a squeaky voice.

Harry looked towards Hermione as she seemed to turn stern at the recognizable characteristics of a house elf.

Dan Granger noticed his daughters' behaviour as well. "Harry why does my daughter seem to hate the little chefs?"

Harry had to stifle his laugh as Hermione turned accusing eyes to her father.

"I hate the fact that they are slaves to the wizards and Witches, Dad!" Hermione said accusingly. Dan Granger frowned at his daughters' disrespectful tone but decided to talk with her about it in private.

A couple of hats seemed to wobble in surprise as Hermione managed to project her voice through the near empty cafeteria. Ron Groaned as he quickly took his lasagne dish away and let Harry step forward.

"What can Chippy get for young master?" The house elf asked unsure if the wizard before her would get as angry as the witch.

"Ah... what's good?" Harry questioned the nervous little critter.

"Chippy does not understand. Does young wizard sir not like what Chippy be making?" The little creature asked as she took off her hat producing watery eyes as she held her hat to her chest.

Harry mentally reviewed what he said and tried to discern whether he had somehow related to the elf that her food wasn't up to snuff.

"What no... I mean yes... I mean... I just wanted to get your opinion." The little creature only sobbed as Harry tried to keep from insulting its cooking.

"Chippy is sorry sir. Chippy tries to make good food... Chippy begs Master Wizard to forgive her." The little elf sobbed harder as she banged her head against the counter top. She took her chefs hat and used it to dab at her eyes.

Harry could only redden at the angry glare being sent his way by Hermione and the looks of disapproval from random order members.

“No Chippy, its okay... I’m sure I’ll like whatever you made. I’ll have what my friend had. The lasagne!” Harry quickly said. The little elf looked up at Harry hopefully. “you’se will? ...Oh Chippy is so Happy. Thank you master wizard.” The elf beamed.

“No, no it was nothing.” Harry didn’t even know why he bothered... the longer he talked with the little blighter the more complicated it was going to get.

“Oh master wizard is far too kind. Forgiving Chippy when Chippy did master wizard a disservice...” the little elf built up steam as it described Harry.

“No Chippy you didn’t...”

“If Master Wizard ever needs anything just call Chippy. Chippy will be doing it right away.” The elf said resolutely. Bobbing her head in further confirmation of her resolve... Sending her ears flapping about like bat wings.

‘How do I keep doing this...?’ Harry asked as he thought about Dobby and the little guys’ devotion to him.

The entire week Chippy would serve Harry exclusively. He quickly learned that the elf was a living mood swing with a severe case of low self esteem. Then again that could be said for most of the species, but this elf seemed to take it to a level only doobby dared to.

Each time Harry thanked her for his meal, she would practically convulse with Joy. Especially when she found out who he was.

“The great wizard Harry Potter thanks Chippy.... Oh Chippy is so happy” After this she would usually cry into her hat some more and get envious looks from the other house elves.

Harry avoided looking at Hermione the entire week.
Present day

“Ok get ready... he should be coming through that door in a minute or two.” A whispered order was announced to the party hat wearing group.

POP

“Stupefy, Convexium, Protego, Accio!” Harry did not even waste a moment to glance at the possible death eaters. He spotted a group of shadowed figures waiting by the entrance in the pitch black room, and fired. He took one by surprise with his stunner and a group of 4 down with his percussion blast. One of them quickly shielded himself, sending his portion of the shockwave back at Harry.

Harry Summoned his own shield and called for a group of brightly coloured boxes he saw behind the group, to race towards him; knocking into many of the members, and sending them sprawling to the ground.

“Harry what do you think you are doing!?” Hermione shrieked as a large box almost knocked her over the head.

“Chippy, find all the members who eat with me during dinner. Bring them here.” Harry ordered as he realized the same people who he came to rescue, were caught in the crossfire. He ran and overturned a table to provide cover as one or two of the attackers were sending spells rapidly at him... mostly stunners and restrainers but one or two unknown curses.

Chippy was shocked to say the least, but followed orders and quickly brought over almost all the members he had been fighting.

POP

“What the...” Harry questioned as he was surrounded by the people he had just attacked. Some of them were still rubbing different parts of their body where the boxes had struck them.

“Mr. Potter, if we had known you would disapprove of surprise parties so much...” Harry heard the deeply amused voice of Albus Dumbledore announce over the momentary pause.

“Surprise Party?” Harry asked a dazed Neville on his left.

The Lights went on and Harry slowly peeked over the table to see the chaos. The boxes he had summoned were brightly coloured presents, and the table he had overturned... had been carrying a now very ruined Cake. He could vaguely make out the words Happy and Harry on the white dessert. Around the room were scorched banners, proclaiming Harry 16.

On the other side of the room were Moody, Tonks, Hagrid, Professor Dumbledore, and a handful of other acquaintances. Even Bob was there though he was currently rubbing the back of his head where a present had winged him.

The Door behind the Order members rapidly opened to let in a winded red head as he yelled. “Harry called a House...elf?” He paused to observe the dishevelled group.

“Ron?” Harry asked warningly...

Harry thanked Chippy once more, and assured her, “had this been an actual attack, you would have been a hero.” Chippy only sobbed harder as she disappeared. Harry liked to think they had been happy tears but the house elf was a rollercoaster of emotions around him.

Harry looked over the rapidly organizing space as wizards and elves fixed the damage his birthday battle had caused.

‘Damn’

“I’m expelled for sure now...” Harry resigned to himself.

“Now why would I expel you Mr. Potter?” Dumbledore asked from behind Harry. Harry didn’t even have the energy to be surprised at his professor’s appearance.

“I did a lot of magic sir. Isn’t this kind of stuff frowned upon by the Wizengamont?” Harry asked tiredly as he turned to face his soon to be ex headmaster.

“Well... only when done illegally.” The professor answered Harry with a bright twinkle in his eye.

“There is a rule that allows for surprise attacks on ones birthday?” Harry asked sarcastically... although with a hint of hope.... the wizarding world kept throwing him the oddest little surprises each year; he wasn’t to sure what was and wasn’t possible anymore.

“Sadly, no. Well not yet at least... maybe I should give you your present now so you can enjoy the rest of your party.” The Headmaster said kindly while pulling out a scroll wrapped in a bright red bow.

“Thanks sir... you shouldn’t have?” Harry said unsurely as he had never really gotten a present from a teacher except his invisibility cloak, and that was his to begin with. Hagrid didn’t count as they had been friends before he became one.

Harry unfurled the paper and silently gasped.

Provision to use magic

I, Albus Percival Wulfric Brian Dumbledore, Warlock of the Order of the Phoenix, do here by grant immunity from the underage restriction of magic laws, to one Harry James Potter. To take place, starting July 31st 1996.

Harry could not read the rest of the paper as he looked up to the headmaster in glee. He could now do magic whenever he wanted to. He really wanted to cackle insanely but held it in.

“Happy Birthday Mr. Potter. While this is primarily so you may start training to defend yourself, you may use your magic as if you were of age. Of course the standard laws of use still apply and you must abide by them, but I am sure you can act accordingly.”

Harry could only nod dumbly as he thanked the man profusely.

For the next half hour Harry was buried under presents as Mrs. Weasley tried to arrange for another cake and food. It was only 10:00

in the morning and Harry had managed to ruin the meal. Harry realized that that was starting to become a pattern with him.

"I can't believe you told him we were attacked... what were you thinking!" Hermione scolded to the approving looks from Mrs. Weasley as she shot her son disapproving ones.

"What, it was funny at the time..." Ron tried to defend himself. The twins were ecstatic with their little brother and Harry found it amusing after he finished glaring at his friend. He did however, turn his glare towards the twins; they wouldn't allow him to leave.

In all Harry's haste to battle the forces of darkness, he forgot to put on clothes. He was currently only managing to keep his dignity in boxers and a white shirt. Mr. Granger who had been knocked on his back from the percussion hex only laughed and thanked Harry for trying to rescue his daughter. Hermione and Ginny just blushed as they refused to look in Harry's pant less direction. Luna on the other hand commented on how she didn't know he bought that pair of boxers. He had just purchased his new shorts from the lazy little village down the road, and an assortment of other things he deemed necessary.

Harry blushed at Luna's directness but was quickly getting used to his state of undress.

"So... Presents?" Harry asked awkwardly.

Harry, Neville, Luna, Ron, and Hermione sat themselves on the repaired stools surrounding the slightly dinged presents. The twins, who were visiting for the morning before heading back to the shop kept placing Reparos on each present before tossing them to Harry.

"That ones from me and daddy" Luna answered when Harry looked at the silver sparkled wrapping paper. Harry smiled at Luna and shook the box theatrically to get clues as to what it could be.

Whatever was inside, clunked back and forth heavily against the confines of the box.

Harry unwrapped it and saw 'Fragile' written in a dozen different languages with symbols of broken glass on every side. Needless to say he was a little worried he had already broken it, but by Luna's wide smile he assumed it would still be okay.

Harry pried open the taped box folds to reveal..." A foot?"

Ron peered over Harry's shoulder and raised an eyebrow, while Neville shot Luna questioning looks. Harry reached in and pulled out a plaster foot from the bubble wrap that had been mostly popped already.

"It's the original plaster mould of the Crumple horned Snorsnak me and daddy were following this summer before we were invited here." She said proudly.

"That's a Childs foot print Luna..." Hermione said tiredly.

Luna looked at the witch in shock and then dawning horror.

"So you're saying we weren't the only ones on the trail... blast!" Luna said worriedly.

"Excuse me." She asked and rushed over to her father where she had a long whispered conversation with him where they gestured their hands wildly.

Hermione only groaned before pointing to a book shaped present and saying "mine".

Harry opened it to find "A Guide to Occlumeny: Beginners edition." Hermione smiled proudly at the book while Ron winced.

Harry did not really know how to react, as this book was a very practical gift from Hermione, but also a reminder of his failure from last year. Ron seemed to think so as well but Hermione only looked on with a smile oblivious to the conflicting emotions.

“Thanks Hermione.” Harry said evenly as he handed Ron the book to put aside.

The rest of the presents were not as emotionally confusing.

Neville gave Harry a wand polishing kit, and the twins gave him a selection of wheezes. Ron and the rest of the Weasley’s had gone in to get a gift for Harry and got him a Muggle long winter Jacket... not unsimilar to the one Harry had seen Remus wearing but much newer. Harry had assumed he had helped get it for him, as it was not a garish color that the Purebloods insisted on dressing in. It was long and reached Harry’s knees, Black and thick. Almost like a robe so he could still wear it in the wizarding world without attracting attention.

“It won’t do you any good now... but in the winter you should be set.” Ron said conversationally. Ginny had been the one to give it to him in some strange youngest child delivery system that they had concocted. Harry would have rather have picked it up himself as the youngest Weasley became bold and plopped down in-between Harry and Ron, making as much body contact with Harry’s uncovered legs as possible.

Harry did not like where this was going as Hermione had assured Harry, Ginny Weasley had gotten over her crush.

Harry reddened noticeably and got up to thank each of the Weasleys who were conveniently scattered all over the room, and away from the female red head.

Apparently Ginny took his escape and blush as a good sign as she smiled brightly.

“Hey Hagrid.” Harry called. Harry was feeling slightly guilty about storming out of Hagrid’s hut; last they met, but knew the kind giant understood.

“Harry” He called in his noticeable accent. “Quite the entrance you made back there...” Hagrid chuckled at the blushing child.

"Ya... I've been told I do that." Harry said as casually as he could while frowning slightly. Harry thanked Hagrid for his Owl feed ('where is Hedwig?') and asked him what he had been up to this summer.

"Ah well ...you know Order business and such." He said nervously.

"Oh... sounds busy. Got anything planned out for Class?" Harry asked conversationally.

Hagrid blinked in surprise at Harry, and then looked at him suspiciously? "Your not going to ask what I've been doing for the Order?"

Harry was a little surprised himself when he said "no." Last year Harry was led to believe a group of amateur Dark wizard hunters were hiding things from him, for his own good of course. At the time He felt he had a right to know what was going on with Voldemort. Now though, He knew a well trained army was going after Riddle. He knew they had secrets to keep and trusted them to do their jobs. They were after all more qualified to do it than Harry was.

"Actually Hagrid that reminds me of something..."

"Oh?"

"Dumbledore said you..."

"Hagrid... Buckbeaks gotten loose again!" an unknown wizard proclaimed as he ducked a swipe from a giant birds claw.

"Sorry Harry, ask me in a bit... sounds important." Hagrid quickly ran off in chase of the Galloping avian/equestrian Hybrid.

Harry could just hear Hagrid wish him a happy birthday before he disappeared around a corner. 'Bugger. I really wanted to ask him about that guide thing'

"Hey Harry, go get your swimming suit. We're going to the beach." Neville called as he and Ron were walking towards the door.

“Who’s on duty today?” Harry asked as he rushed to catch up with his flatmates.

“We are!” Tonks playfully tussled Harry’s hair as she walked beside the group. Bob just walked slowly behind while Fred and George watched Luna stick party hats that had tassels (which swung around in a circle when there was clapping) to his pectorals.

“She’s good” George Commented.

Fred just nodded as the large man tried to act like he didn’t notice his pointed paper breasts. Luna just clapped happily while the man twitched.

They entered their rooms and after Harry changed into a pair of jeans, he searched through his purchases for his swim trunks he had bought specifically for the beach.

HOOT

Harry turned around to find his owl sitting on his nightstand with a twig in her talons.

“Hedwig... where have you been. I’ve been so worried.” Harry stroked Hedwig’s head affectionately as she cooed into his touch. Harry heard a clatter and saw his wand role away from the nightstand.

‘How’d that get there?’ Harry asked no one as he stuffed it into his back pocket.

Harry never noticed that the twig Hedwig had brought was nowhere in sight.

“Maybe you should pick up a different suit Luna... that one was kind of small on you.” Ginny suggested to her spacey friend.

“It’s the first time I wore it... I got it last year.”

‘I thought it looked great.’ Harry and Ron were of the same mind as they liked Luna’s polka dotted, yellow bikini.

"Well while were there, we can pick you up one too, Ginny." Hermione suggested.

"What was wrong with my suit?!" She asked venomously.

"Your mum picked it out for you, didn't she...?" Hermione gently asked the girl.

Ginny looked like she was about to try to defend her swimming gear but deflated and answered...

"...ya"

Ginny had been wearing something from the Victorian era. Almost as ghastly as what Ron had to wear for his Yule ball but twice as frilly. Either Mrs. Weasley did not want to have her daughter expose any skin to any observing boys or she really had the pureblood fashion sense down.

Harry honestly wasn't sure which was more likely.

"You guys go ahead... I want to pick up some stuff from the grocers." Ron and Neville joined Harry as he went in search of candies. Bob accompanied them as Tonks went with the girls. The twins had already bid the group adieu when they saw the scantily clad muggle women, littering the yellow sand as far as their eyes could see.

The boys had noticed Dumbledore's forlorn looks at his candy bag and decided to get him a new confection. There was still strong debate about why the lemon drops were no longer a part of his diet, the leading theory was that the twins had some how tainted the sweets with some joke product. Harry got vague flashes of the sword wielding lemon once more but decided to do as he did in second year, and hope his subconscious would shut up.

"You think Dumbledore's a Gummy man?" Ron asked. He had become enamoured with the sweets. Fred and George offered to put a similar charm on them like the chocolate frogs... but that didn't turn out so well with the tiny bears trying to waddle away. About a dozen

escaped and were currently hidden about the tower. Luna was frequently seen hiding the dozen sugary midgets when Crookshanks tried to hunt them down. It both amused and disturbed Harry when she cooed to one as if it were her child.

“No, it might remind him he’s old.” Ron back tracked..

“Old?” Harry tried to follow his friend’s logic but did not see the connection.

“Gummy bears, Gums... toothless old men!” Ron clarified as if it were obvious.

As odd as this conversation was, Harry was enjoying it immensely. Not once in the last month had Ron and he had to discuss Voldemort. Hermione tried to bring up Harry’s need to study alluding to defense, but even she let the self proclaimed dark lord rest. Harry thought this might be what his farther and Sirius had been like when they were younger.

He didn’t care what Snape showed him in his pensive. Harry did not think Snape was ever a decent bloke, who was only ever minding his business before he was attacked by his dad. Sure his view of his farther had been slightly tainted but he had never known the man. Harry had come to the conclusion that he was bound to idealise the man and let some of the shame go.

Harry zoned back to the present conversation as Ron shook his shoulder.

“Harry?”

“Hmm... sorry what were you saying?” Harry asked.

“I said... what’s with all the Muggles watching the picture boxes” Ron pointed to the growing crowd outside the electronics store on the other end of the street.

“Not sure?” Harry said absentmindedly as he was back to shifting through different candies.

“Guys...”

Harry and Ron turned to the distressed voice of Neville who was watching one of the televisions up front where the store clerks and few customers stared in awe.

Harry jogged up to Neville and tried to get a good view of the Screen. What ever Neville was watching had shocked him deeply.

“Governments world wide have released top secret case studies and research pertaining to the 78 000....”

Harry was getting frustrated being over shadowed by the tall clerks and decided to stand on one of the ledges near the screen.

As Harry looked at the screen unobstructed, he caught a series of clips of men and women with their hands extended, sending streams of light at different objects. ‘Holy shi...’

“The 78,000 are believed to be the next step in human evolution. This group of individuals have life spans that seem to put them well beyond normal standards. They exhibit mental and physical abilities only dreamed of before. There are reports of a select few who can predict events as far as half a century into the future. They are claimed to have helped avert many classified disasters...”

The images displayed in the top corner expanded to let the group see an elderly Asian women in her late seventies. She walked calmly up to a puddle of water. The audience watched amazed as she set it ablaze and held it within her hands. Never once wincing from the heat.

Harry noticed a blinking, blue light under her shirt sleeve as she let the liquid fire flow through her fingers. She shook her hands to let the remaining liquid fly away in fiery droplets that simply evaporated into the ether.

“The women you are currently watching is one of the first discovered at the age of 8. One might wonder how government’s world wide

helped hide the existence of these extraordinary abilities for just over half a century... “

The anchor women paused and let her co host continue there well rehearsed speech.

“Well what you should be wondering is how they managed to hide them for a hundred and eleven years. That’s right, the women you are watching is 119 years old. Yet she moves and looks as if she were decades younger. ” The female reporter next to the male one, made a quip about how the women might not appreciate him telling the world about her age.

Harry felt a hand on his shoulder squeeze tightly. He looked down from his position above the ledge storing ice creams and other frozen deserts, into the troubled eyes of his bodyguard as he pulled Neville and Ron towards Harry.

As the group was dropped into their quarters avoiding all the hectic members of the order scrambling about the complex at a frenzied rate, Ron could only say.

“Your birthdays are always interesting... you know that right?”

Harry had come to the same conclusion.

AN: alright we are starting to get into one of the major plot points of my story... The 78000 (an homage to one of my favourite tv shows) are going to be popping up every now and then... they aren’t integral but they bring up a lot issues I want my story to deal with.

I’m trying to cut back on the Hermione bashing as I don’t want this to be a fic where she has suddenly become all distasteful... she will have her positive moments as well but ultimately... well I cant tell you what ultimately will happen but I think it’s a good ultimate fate for her, what I have planned.

Chippy is also a minor plot point... normally I don’t want to add other characters but somehow I just can’t turn away a hormonal house elf from my mind. Dobby Chippy interaction should be interesting to write.

To those of you, who think I'm just pulling this stuff out my ass and winging it... well I have the plot planned out on computer up till chapter 22 (About February story time) and I got the whole story planned out in my head, in a less organized manor. The ass part is still up for debate. I've got a beta who has accepted editing my horrible mess of writing but she is catching up right now, editing my previous work and going over my extremely detailed outline. I'll post them unbetaed and edit the chapters later with the betaed ones. I'm still accepting betas as I could always do with a second opinion.

The next chapter will do with the reactions to the revelation of the 78000...

Points to anyone who can guess the tune I was humming while writing about Luna's bathing suit.

Chapter 4 – What is a name?

Fudge wasn't having a good month... no he wasn't having a good term! First Harry Potter decides to tell him that the greatest threat to wizarding world in probably over 400 years is not only back but collecting followers.

It didn't help that the story was so preposterous, that he believed it impossible.

Then the potter child, again, has to go and prove he was telling the truth after fudge spent over a year calling Harry Potter a liar. Unfortunately, Rita Skeeter, who had a mass following of gossip starved housewives and gullible lunatic supporters, decided to do a 180 and support the boy when she previously had started the whole attention seeking psychopath rumours to begin with. It was really all her fault.

Then his Undersecretary who Fudge had been recorded as saying would make a fantastic high inquisitor and defence teacher, had charges of abusing her students laid against her.

Not to mention Sirius Black being proven to have fought against Voldemort at the ministry skirmish, forcing people to question his guilt. The Weasley toady becoming a turncoat and leaking confidential details to the blasted Order of the Phoenix... allowing an enquiry to be proposed.

And then there was the media (his greatest friend and enemy) fully proclaiming Harry a tortured hero. Tortured at the hands of Minister Fudge himself.

To top it all off...

"You exposed the Magical World YOU FOOL!" a very red Magical Minister bellowed into the calm face of his non magical counter part.

"Centuries of hard work destroyed. You are going to be locked up in the dankest cell in Azkaban... Do You Hear Me!" Spittle flew from Fudges mouth landing on the Ministers desk. The Prime Minister

pulled out a tissue from a flower encrusted box and cleaned the liquid of his well polished desk. Returning to his relaxed position once the spit was gone, the Prime minister looked at his guest in a pleasant manner.

“Hello Minister Fudge, can I interest you in a drink?” the man only received a glare in response to his hospitality. “No... maybe next time then.” The Prime minister pulled a black device off his desk and pressed a button while speaking into one end... “Helen, can I have you bring me up some ...”

What the prime minister was about to ask for was never heard as Fudge slammed the handle back on to its place holder.

“Well that was quite rude Minister...” The prime minister said indignantly to the rapidly reddening face of Fudge.

“Do you understand what you have done...”

“What have I done?”

“What have you...? YOU EXPOSED MAGIC!” Fudge boomed once more.

“No I haven’t” The minister said calmly. Fudge almost believed him... letting his hope that luck had finally sided with him and changed the past weeks events to suit fudges little happy world. But Fudge knew by now that Luck was a cruel bitch, and she didn’t seem to like him too much.

“You announced it all over the world... we know, it’s been on your televisions repeatedly.” The Minister growled.

‘Who did he think he was, trying to deny it? I’m not an idiot’

“Oh you mean the 78000!” The man said in showy realization.

“Quite a remarkable group...” He said conversationally. Fudge didn’t like the all too familiar twinkle in the mans eye. It was knowing and

superior. It reminded him of Dumbledore and that condescending way he always spoke with him... as if he were some idiot child.

“Don’t hide behind your silly little names... you’ve kidnapped wizarding citizens, and brainwashed them into performing for you.”

Fudge was sure that by the end of the week he would be kicked out of office. Even if it could not possibly be his fault; he had made too many mistakes, and found himself crossing the wrong people too often this term. The only chance he had was to somehow get the people to blame someone else and forget about the minister long enough for him to garner any support he could bribe, blackmail, or beg into helping him. That was why he was here, the meeting with the minister was to see his reaction and plan how he was to present his scapegoat.

Fudge had expected the man to be cowering in fear of him, completely remorseful, and begging for forgiveness.

“I assure you minister, those individuals are all free to do as they wish and have been helping us willingly for over a century. As we have helped them.” The man said assuredly if not smugly.

“Enough of this... you will go to your newspapers, and claim it a hoax. You will deny it and pray that you see the light of day after I’m through with you.” Fudge ordered. He was getting highly uncomfortable with the self assured looks of the man.

‘He just doesn’t know what a dementor can do is all... He will soon’ the minister thought malevolently.

“No”

“And then you will have these wizards and witches meet with our ...” Fudge had just understood what the man had said as he lounged in his chair.

“No?”

“No” The minister assured him as he leaned back.

“Now see here... you have broken international treaties. You will do as I...”

“I’ve broken no treaties minister...” The man said confidently.

“Broken No treaties...? You Expo...”

“Exposed the magical World yes yes... I heard you the first few times...” The man said tiredly. “I am telling you that I did not.”

‘The man is insane!’

“If that isn’t exposing the magical world, what is it then?” The man asked condescendingly!

The minister seemed to perk up as if he had finally gotten to the part he was looking forward to.

“We have simply revealed research findings of an advanced stage of evolution. Our treaties state that all instances of magic are to be held within your control.... However, Muggle matters are muggle matters. That means that all breakthroughs in science are within our discretion. The 78000 are a scientific breakthrough, thus we have broken no treaties. Quite remarkable really... we have been studying the phenomenon for over a century as you’ve heard.”

Fudge paled as he realized what the man had said. “You studied...”

‘They experimented on witches and wizards... they probably tortured them into doing their bidding!’ Fudge panicked. ‘They aren’t supposed to be able to do that... what if they try to capture me next!’

The other minister quickly realized what the minister was thinking.

“Oh don’t worry, completely voluntary. It was hard to find them at first but once we knew what to look for... The research is quite groundbreaking. “The man said excitedly as he turned his back towards the minister and decided to get himself a drink.

“You sure you don’t want a brandy?” the man offered distractedly.

“Stop this nonsense at once! I am the minister of magic... I demand you turn over all information you have collected on us and you will comply...” again the minister was interrupted by the mild but quick uncooperative answers.

“No... mmm I do so love this drink.” The man continued to enjoy his amber liquid as the other minister was starting to lose what dignity he could muster.

“Now see here...”

“If you look on the coffee table by the fire place, you will see a brown envelope.” The man said as if he was finally starting a serious conversation. He leaned forward and clasped his hands together around his short glass, as he sat in a well padded couch across from Fudge.

Fudge who thought maybe the man had started to see reason went over and opened the folds of the paper and pulled out...

“What is this?” fudge said, puzzled by the blue envelope and files that read “Treaty negotiations. (tentative schedule).”

“As we speak your other magical ministers are receiving similar envelopes... The blue one is a plane ticket to get you to our chosen local. Within four weeks, we will meet again in Australia at the predetermined installation... you will find when you land, you will be greeted by an entourage of security and guides to help you acclimate to your time in Perth.

“What in damnation are you talking about?” Fudge did not like feeling like he was not in the know... he had hoped it would be the one wielding the wand, who would control this confrontation. Namely, him.

“Well you will find out in the envelope once you read it but I will summarize some of the key points... The negotiations are to be done to re evaluate the relationship the normal and magical governments have. We will discuss issues such as land rights, distribution of

resources, laws, and other pressing issues. It will probably be a very long process... The negotiations could go on for years really." The man said thoughtfully.

"Re-evaluate our relationship? What do you think gives you the right to do that..." the pompous man goaded. 'A muggle is telling me what to do... if he weren't insane I might laugh'

The man stiffened at the jibe but let it pass as he said. "You may find that the 'muggle' government is willing to be an excellent ally minister... or a very dangerous enemy." The minister warned as he stood rigidly and walked over to his desk where he forcefully pulled at the handle of the device he tried to use earlier and said calmly. "Please show the minister out Helen."

"Now see here, were not through." Fudge bristled at being ignored.

"I'm sorry minister but I do have a very busy schedule. If you need to contact me there is a phone number to schedule appointments... none of that popping in nonsense you've been doing. Its quite rude you know." The man said casually as he grabbed a portfolio and started to put on his coat.

"You can show yourself out..."

"You will stay here and clear your schedule. You are going to fix..."

"I'm truly sorry minister but I must be going."

Fudge snapped. 'He leaves when I say he can!'

"Petrificus Totalus!" The minister stiffened and fudge was waiting for the man to fall over so he could start to yell at his terrified body. To Fudges surprise, the man just stood still with his shoulders hunched.

'He's stuck standing up... that doesn't usually happen' the man thought. 'Either way, he can listen to me or he wont be moving from that position.' Fudge thought smugly. He took a step forward as he cleared his voice and started his long winded monologue.

“Now you will...”

“Security...”

No sooner than the man had said the word than a dozen men in black clothing filled the room from God knows where.

“How... Ooof” Fudge was manhandled as he was pushed to the floor while a couple other agents shackled him and patted him in different locations.

“Unhand me you...”

“He’s clear sir!”

“Good. Now minister for unprovoked attack and... I believe you were trying to restrain me... which could be considered kidnapping easily... My men will have to take you in. I believe you will be released once they are assured you have learnt your lesson, but you will have plenty of time to read through that envelope I prepared for you.”

“How did you break free? Muggles cant break the hex.” Fudge didn’t even care that he was talking so openly about magic in front of a squadron of muggles. He wanted to know how the prime minister had done the impossible.

“I never broke the ...hex did you say? You just never cast it.” The man said as if it were obvious.

“What are you talking about?” Fudge was no Dumbledore, or aurora, but he knew how to cast that spell. ‘Had done it a few times too.’

“Oh I completely forgot to tell you minister...” The man said as if he believed he had forgotten by accident.

“As of...seven minutes ago I believe...” He received a nod from what looked like the leader of the muggle mob who was restraining the panicked man.

“Yes seven minutes ago, all magic within Normal cities and villages have been inhibited until further notice. You should find it all in that envelope...”

“What do you mean inhibited.” Fudge interrupted caustically as he struggled against his captives.

“Hmm oh I thought inhibited was a good word to use... well from now until further notice... no magic can or will be performed by a magic user on the non magical's land. Of course we have made an allowance for your healing magic but that is the only exception. Any crimes committed on our soil by a wizard or witch will be dealt with by us and should we feel it acceptable...”

“You can't turn off magic!” Fudge was terrified... no one could just suppress magic. No one could stop him from being a wizard... ‘I am no Squib!’

Fudge concentrated on separating out of the large man's grip and getting to Auror headquarters where he would have each and every man arrested and in Azkaban faster than he could say Black.

Fudge stiffened and tried. He tried again... he started to thrash in his attempts that were failing him. He didn't care if he permanently splinched himself. He needed to be able to do magic.

“How ...HOW Are you doing this?” the man who was nearly in tears as his gift would not work. It was like waking to find his arms amputated after playing catch the day before. It terrified the man.

“As I said, It's all in the envelope. I believe you will have to go with security now... Minister” the man said with a predatory grin on his face.

The guards started to pull him up as he was being guided to the door to a very grey cell.

“You can't do this... I have magic!” Fudge said desperately if not a little crazed.

The other minister stopped and raised his left hand in a gesture indicating them to stop.

“Minister Fudge, I want you to understand something.” The man said calmly. He paused and let his words drift around the room before continuing.

“I learned when I was starting politics that everything has a name. Names helped us identify what it was we were referring to; it also helped us identify its place in our world. It helped ground us; mould our thoughts, our actions, and our reactions.”

“Magic is but a name minister. It helped us hope for a better world where dreams are possible. It had its place and it served us faithfully... but we have reached a stage where we are out growing its comfort. We are starting to understand it minister.”

He finally turned to face the man with the lost expression. He almost felt sorry for the man... almost.

"It's only magic when we can't understand it. It's only magic when there are no explanations for its existence.... It's only magic when it's still magical. When magic is none of these things, it stops being magic."

“Magic has a new name... we call it Science. I suggest you remember that.”

[illegible]

Minister of Magic Arrested by Muggles

Magical Blackouts Revealed to be Muggle Based.

North American ministries declare civil war on their muggle counterparts.

These were the headlines over the next week. The citadel had gone into a sort of lockdown upon the news of the exposure, where only a select few individuals were allowed to come and go, while

Dumbledore attended the summit in Australia. As such most of the order was restless and edgy.

After being yelled at repeatedly for getting in the way of high strung, nameless order members, the group decided to spend most of their time in the boys' quarters; as the girls was no where as big or luxurious.

"Calm down Ron I'm sure there won't be witch hunts anymore." Hermione said patiently as she tried to calm down her male friend. Most of the purebloods had been frantic with worry of attack. Living a life surrounded by magic and suddenly finding out that they could not perform it wherever they chose to was needless to say, very disconcerting.

Their fears weren't completely unfounded as even though many witches and wizards had escaped the hunts unscathed, some had been killed when their wands had been taken away, or destroyed.

"Calm down... how can I? This is a disaster."

"What's so bad about it?" Harry asked. He knew the wizarding world had its little quirks but he never understood all the hoopla with hiding the magical world. Harry understood that this was a big deal of course but why everyone, including the muggleborns, were acting near hysterical, was beyond him.

Hermione looked up at Harry as if she was just now seeing him. "It will cause problems Harry. The muggles won't understand what we are... imagine your relatives times 6 billion. They will try to eradicate us."

Harry shivered at the thought of 6 billion Aunt Petunias. Harry thought Hermione was being a little hasty though in her condemnation.

"There probably will be groups like that, ya... but just because my relatives are like that doesn't mean all muggles will be like that... look at your parents." Harry was pleased he didn't bow out after Hermione used her lecturing tone on him. Normally he would just shut up and let her think she had persuaded him to her way of thinking. Normally

he and she were of the same mind so it wasn't an issue but sometimes Harry just did not agree but would get flustered by Hermione's self confidence. 'Not this time'

"Well my parents are okay with magic but they are still tense when they find out about some magical things." Hermione explained. "It's gotten to the point where I just don't tell them anything about what goes on at school anymore."

Harry realized he was getting into dangerous territory; he really wanted to question Hermione on how much she actually talked to her parents about anything but realized he might be crossing some boundaries. It just frustrated him because like Ron, Hermione had a decent home life with not just parents, but accepting parents who were supportive of their daughter. This summer was one of the few times Harry had actually gotten to see Hermione interact with her family and Harry thought that she spoke to her parents as if she were talking to Neville or himself in potions.

"Well... I don't know enough about your family to say much; but I'd rather hopes that the muggles would react similar to your parents. I mean it's not like they are going to tie you to a stake and set you on fire for the guy Fawkes bonfires"

"How do you know?" Neville asked nervously. He was acting a bit better composed than Ron, but was extra fidgety since he first saw the story on the Television.

Harry was getting irritated now. 'What am I missing here?'

"I ask you, what's so bad about the muggles knowing we exist" Harry was getting frustrated and inadvertently growled at his fellow Gryffindor. Harry would feel sorry for that later but other than the fear of witch hunts starting up again Harry couldn't see what was so bad.

"They'll try to get us to ... you know do magic for them." Neville stuttered. Ron nodded emphatically as if this was a very insightful answer.

"So?"

“So... so they will try to get us to solve their problems for them with magic.” Hermione said equally exasperated with her friend.

“So let them ask... its not like its such a bad idea.” Harry ground out.

“Not such a bad idea... its horrible... cant you see how terrible that could turn out” Hermione asked incredulously.

“Explain it to me... what is the worst that could happen if the muggles asked us for help.” Harry challenged.

“Why they... the muggles could...” Ron tried to think up a suitably horrible situation but was drawing a blank.

“If the muggles asked us for help; we could do it or we could refuse... its not like were going to become slaves.” Harry said resolutely to the momentarily perplexed group.

“How do you know... we could be the next house elves” Ron said terrified. Hermione seemed to perk up and shudder all at once. It was a moment that Ron had truly empathized with the house elves, but also a moment where she realized she could be the one needing a S.P.E.W. for herself.

“Why would they do that?” Harry asked

“For our magic...” Neville said.

“But what’s stopping us from fighting back with our magic if they try that?” Harry goaded.

“They could suppress our magic like they are doing now” Hermione pointed out.

“But then we aren’t able to do magic for them... we would be exactly like them. The wizarding world may be small but we are spread out... they know that, it’s not like they want a war.” Harry said reasonably. Harry was enjoying arguing his thoughts. It felt nice to be able to defend his own beliefs instead of someone else’s.

Harry had never really been satisfied when Hagrid had told him the same argument for why magic was a secret. He did not agree at the time because this was the man that was freeing him from the Dursleys, but he had always questioned the logic of his argument.

"Luna what do you think?" Neville asked. Luna had been quite throughout the discussion, and continued to stare vacantly at the articles.

"I'm not completely happy that it has happened..."

"see even Luna agrees" Hermione proclaimed a little surprised that the girl was taking the reasonable approach.

"... but" Hermione groaned as the girl continued to subvert her logical ideals. "They never actually called it magic. The magical world is still hidden, only now they are giving us all a cover. Technically we could now do magic and claim to be a part of the group."

Harry smiled smugly around the room as everyone realized that Luna was right. Harry remembered at the end of last year how Luna had been able to calm him down. She seemed to have a knack for setting things in perspective. The girl could be very perceptive and profound when she wanted to be.

"This could be a good thing; they could help us make new discoveries in any number of fields." Harry nodded at this in firm support of what Luna was saying as she was starting to sway even Hermione.

Luna paused and looked at Harry. "Do you think if daddy and I approached them they could help us find the snorfnaks?"

Harry paused his smile and tried to comprehend Luna's question. He mused that it was inevitable for Luna to say something like that.

"They just might Ms. Lovegood." A grandfatherly voice answered to Harry's far left.

“Do you think so?” Luna asked unsurprised at the mysterious entrance of Albus Dumbledore.

“I would suggest you consult with your farther on the matter but at the moment it might be better to wait until the situation start to cool down before you approach anyone about the subject.

“Hello sir”

“Good evening Mr. Potter. I have just arrived back from the negotiations. I thought you might appreciate a little gossip from an old man.” The headmaster smiled at the group.

“Of course Professor” Hermione gushed as she leaned forward with rapt attention. Harry privately thought the information was more for himself but was unsure as to why this was significant enough that the headmaster would take time out of his schedule to explain it personally.

“Professor, not that we don’t appreciate you telling us... but why are you telling us?” Harry asked. Hermione shot him a scathing look at his question while Ron looked at him as if he was crazy. Neville who looked at Harry a little perplexed had a thoughtful look upon his face as well as he turned to stare at the headmaster expectantly.

“An excellent question Harry, I won’t be telling you everything of course but much of what we discussed will have deep impacts on the wizarding world. These impacts affect the wizarding world positively and negatively, thus affecting our fight against Voldemort in a similar manner.”

Harry was starting to grasp where the headmaster was headed and silently hoped that he would not...

“Like I told you in my office at the end of last year I won’t be keeping secrets from you that directly involve you again...” Harry was shaking his head with wide eyes as subtlety as possible, while looking at each person in the room significantly.

The headmasters frowned slightly but did not go into further detail.

“as I was saying... the summit was used primarily to introduce the issues that the mugg...non magical world wished to change. They are being quite forceful in their demands, I must admit, but they are not completely unreasonable.”

“How so?” Hermione asked as she continued to stare at Harry suspiciously.

“For example, they have implemented their own form of unforgivable spells list. Any use of these spells on a non magical individual will result in life imprisonment. It is still a mystery as to how they acquired their knowledge of magic but because of it; it is now illegal to perform memory charms with the standard unforgivables.”

“Why memory charms?” Ron asked.

“As you and Mr. Potter learned in second year, it does not take a very powerful wizard to perform the charm and erase any sensitive memory from the minds of their victims. It is actually a very appropriate spell to be classified as unforgivable. The only reason the magical world has never classified it thusly is because of their previous need to erase evidence of a magical incident.”

“Sir?” Ron asked. ‘He simply did not comprehend how obliviate ranked with Crucio.

“Mr. Weasley, Imagine for a moment that you are a mugg... Non magical individual, and you come home to find your family being held captive by a random wizard. They may have come simply to rob your family of your possessions but they inadvertently killed one if not all of them. Would you want to have another wizard come along and forcefully remove the last moments you’ve had with your family all to keep their world secret.”

Ron paled at the thought and Harry momentarily wondered how hopeless he would feel in such a situation, with someone waving a stick to manipulate his mind like that.

"It is a sad fact I'm afraid, that this story has happened many, many more times than I can comprehend. A person could go from enjoying a Weasley style dinner with siblings and parents, to eating alone, and never know what happened to leave them so lonely." Dumbledore said morosely.

Harry was indignant for the muggles. He thought about the department of mysteries and if he had been a muggle he would never remember that his godfather had willingly come to help him. It ate at his soul everyday, that his godfather died for him, but it also filled him with such a sense of belonging that Harry felt guilty that he could take any joy out of the situation. The man had risked his life repeatedly because he cared for his godson so. Harry would never want to forget the pride that he had in his godfather, the pride that Sirius Black was his Godfather, and no one else's...

"The non magical world never agreed to the statue of secrecy as they were the ones that would be forced to enforce it willingly or not. The wizarding world has claimed land and resources over the centuries because they were stated to be magical, thus belonging to themselves according to the treaty. The wizarding world has erased evidence of horrendous crimes against the muggle world simply because they could and the muggles would never know. The wizarding world has already conquered the non magical world, simply because the non magical could not enforce their basic human rights... until now." The headmaster said quietly but passionately.

"As a result of this the wizarding world is on a type of probationary period. By the end of the week the suppression field they have created around their cities will be disabled on good faith that the wizarding world will behave. All apparition and portkey privileges onto their land will be regulated through their government and any laws broken on their land will be dealt with by their own law enforcement."

"Is that all, that doesn't sound so bad?" Neville said in relief.

"As I said, they are being quite reasonable so far. Unfortunately many of the more pureblood based governments are having trouble accepting the high handed approach the muggles are taking. They

are actually quite fortunate to have had the North American continents declare civil war on their non magical counter parts...”

“Sir?” Harry asked a little disturbed that the headmaster saw the benefit to an entire continent going to war.

“Oh... that did not come out as I had intended... you see the non magical governments have been given an opportunity to show the magical world that they are capable of fighting against a magical enemy. By the end of the month the order has projected that the large scale attacks by the magical government will be completely abolished and the skirmishes will be in small vigilante groups after the government concedes to a cease fire.”

“Within a month?” Ron said incredulously. Everyone in the room was surprised by the estimated defeat of the North American wizards. A few weeks ago Harry would have laughed at the idea of the muggle overpowering a magical army... now he was living the unlikely scenario.

“Oh yes... the magical world at the moment is currently unable to combat the suppression field the muggles have some how devised. As a result they are forced to rely on physical combat and weapons. Since the last time a wizard has fought with a weapon that wasn't a wand, was in the era of the founders... you can see how they are at a disadvantage without magic. The order is far more capable of going to war but since we are unanimous in our decision to resolve the situation peacefully the North American wizarding world are forced to use their auror force.”

“Now from what I have told you about the situation... can you make a connection to Voldemort.” Harry ignored the slight twitches his friends had at the name.

‘There are so many different ways this affects Voldemort and me... Voldemort can't use magic with the suppressors... then again neither can I.’

Harry looked at the headmaster and tried to answer but ran through dozens of different aspects that could be important.

"You-Know-Who won't attack anyone until he understands the suppressors more."

Harry turned to Luna in surprise. "How do you figure?"

"Ms. Lovegood is quite correct. I can see why you were placed in Ravenclaw." The headmaster praised. Harry could have sworn he saw Luna blush under the headmaster's compliment. "Please do explain further." The headmaster asked the odd girl.

"Well, You-Know-Who, just lost a lot of his followers and was recently exposed to the wizarding world. If he were to attack now and fail against the muggles it would be a blow to his persona. Some of his pureblood support would question his leadership capabilities and he would have dissension amongst his followers, also it's possible the wollykomas will use the attacks against the muggles as a chance to take You-Know-Who host while he can't perform the proper incantation to repel them." Luna said authoritatively. Ron snorted at the last bit and Dumbledore chuckled at the inclusion of the mystery creature.

"I had not thought of the wollykomas myself. That would indeed be something to be concerned about." The headmaster smiled at the girl. Harry wasn't sure how serious the headmaster was but had the feeling that even if he was humouring her it was done in the most respectful way he had heard yet.

Hermione looked on conflicted as Luna Lovegood had given an insightful and if Dumbledore was to be believed, accurate analysis of the situation... but she had also mentioned a fictitious creature and other nonsense. She chose to remain quiet, for no other reason than the headmaster's presence.

"Now I am not telling you this Harry to put your guard down, Allastor would be quite offended if you did. I am mentioning this to ease your mind for the foreseeable future. It will no doubt come as a shock when Voldemort does finally attack but I do not see such an occurrence happening anytime soon." The headmaster said warmly.

Harry smiled his thanks.

"Now I must be going, but I do need to talk to you Harry about something else... can you accompany me while I head to the board room?" The headmaster asked carelessly.

Harry nodded and got up to follow. He did not see the suspicious looks Hermione was shooting him, nor the thoughtful look Neville had on.

Harry and the headmaster walked in silence for the next few minutes until they reached the room with the enormous table. The headmaster hit a concealed button on the wall and the walls shimmered and crackled before fading out of existence... but not without leaving a quite high pitched hum in its wake.

"I'm sorry Harry, I was not aware that you had not told your friends about the prophecy yet." The headmaster apologised.

'Yet?' Harry realized that the headmaster had expected him to tell his friends the prophecy. He wasn't sure whether he would enforce this expectation if Harry didn't.

"Sir... I'm not sure I will tell my friends the prophecy at all." Harry said nervously.

The headmaster did not say anything. His face remained expressionless as he faced Harry.

"May I ask why?" Harry hated it when the headmaster was expressionless. He felt like he was digging his own grave with each word.

"Well like you said, Voldemort does not know the full contents of the prophecy. The fewer people I were to tell about the prophecy, the less likely that he will get the contents of it."

"I do not believe your friends would betray your..."

“No sir... it's not that. Its just, the prophecy isn't even safe in my mind as it is, I don't want to even think about giving Voldemort four other targets to get the full contents of the prophecy from.”

Harry watched the headmaster as he was clearly surprised by his student. ‘Did he expect me to already be able to protect the information...?’ Harry wondered apprehensively.

“I am ... surprised that you would admit your limitations in protecting the prophecy.”

Harry did not need reminding of the moment he learned of his destiny. At the time he was ready to perform his second unforgivable at the sheer indignation that the headmaster had hidden something so big from him. But after enough time Harry had come to realize that he was his own security risk until he learned to protect his mind.

‘I couldn't even shield my mind from Snape. How am I supposed to protect it from Voldemort?’

“I've had time sir” Harry said emotionlessly.

“Well I am proud of your for recognizing your limitations, but you are still able to tell them the first half of the prophecy while we arrange for a way for you to protect you mind. I believe I did tell you that Voldemort only heard that much.” The headmaster suggested. “I don't want you to believe I am forbidding you from disclosing this information to your friends after you have done so much together.”

Harry winced.

“Ah... I see there is another reason.” The headmaster said knowingly.

Harry thought about just walking out but felt the need to defend his position.

“I can't tell them sir. They will try to demand to help... If I were to go into that room again and tell them it's him or me, they'll do something stupid and feel obligated to try and help me fight him, if they have to

die trying; not to mention their families.” Harry said in one long breath. Harry was pacing as he revealed his fear to his headmaster.

“Is it not their choice Mr. Potter?” The headmaster said sadly. Harry thought that just maybe, the headmaster was not really trying to persuade him to tell the prophecy; he seemed to be trying to just understand Harry’s motivation.

"It may be their choice to fight, but it's my choice to let them fight with me. You said the prophecy isn't set in stone; fine, but the prophecy does say that only one of us has to die for it to be over. I'm not increasing the number just on the off chance that I may live to bury one of my friends... I've had enough of that." Harry said angrily.

“There is still a chance that your friends will die if they are not told of the prophecy.” The Headmaster said reasonably.

“I’m not naive enough to believe that the people I care about will all survive. But there is still a chance, and I am going to cling to it.” Harry was breathing deeply as his fists trembled. He had worked himself up and knew that if he were to continue he might start to release tears. His insecurities about his own death and his fears that the people around him would die as well were now laid out there, he was vulnerable... he did not like that.

The headmaster did not say anything for what seemed like an eternity; he finally looked up to Harry with unreadable eyes.

"I have said this before... but we are more similar than I would care to admit Harry." The headmaster said in that same dead voice that he remembered him saying it in, last time.

“I understand your feelings on the issue more than you might believe; should you ever need to talk with me on the matter my door will always be open. I will not bring up the subject further.” Harry and the Professor both knew that neither would ever discuss it again even if the option was available.

[illegible]

“What was that about Harry?” Hermione asked immediately once Harry entered the room. She took a stance reminiscent of Mrs. Weasley at her most formidable.

“Nothing much.” Harry said distracted. Hermione narrowed her eyes at Harry.

“He just wanted to talk to me about my future is all” Harry said.

It wasn't quite a lie but Harry didn't feel sorry in the slightest. This was his business and he would handle it his way.

“What about it?” Hermione pressed on.

“Just some private matters.” Harry said with finality.

Hermione frowned at Harry's clear refusal. "What did the headmaster mean about him hiding things from you?" Hermione asked instead.

'Dear God cant she let anything go.' Harry glared irately at his friend. Before ignoring her and turning to Ron and saying....

“I’m heading to bed... Night”

Harry saw in the reflection of the mirror on the right of his door that Hermione had opened her mouth to say something but Neville had placed his hands on her shoulder and shook his head in a firm commanding no.

Harry was never so glad that he could perform magic as he was now. He placed a locking charm and silencio on his door, opened his window and looked up into the night sky. Hedwig decided to forgo her hunt to keep her master company as he mirrored a white bearded man in another part of the tower being comforted by a scarlet colored bird who appeared out of a sudden fireball.

Both would not move from their spots until being called to do so in the morning.

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AN: This is a fairly slow chapter but was necessary to set up some things for the next chapter and some events further into the story.

The muggles got suppressors... Personally I don't remember any story I read where the muggles had some way of blocking magic but it sounded too cliché for there to never have been one. Some of you might say that's it's a bit unrealistic for muggles to be able to develop something so advanced... I disagree because in my story they have been studying magic for over a century world wide. I will go into further detail in later chapters about the 78000 and the muggle involvement... I may make another one shot explaining it in its entirety. I can't think of a way to do it without revealing some things that shouldn't be happening till after spring in my story... until then, they shall remain a mystery.

But for now... ill say that all the 78000 have been wizards and witches that never were invited into the magical world. Shant say any more.

This chapter also introduces Harry's main motivation through out this story. I hope it doesn't sound too angsty but I don't wanna fic where Harry's friends convince him, he needs them to beat Voldemort... that kinda stuff always annoyed me.

Anyway... im going to try to update frequently to catch up the timelines before Christmas... But its doubtful I'll be able to as that's about 9 chapters within 2 weeks.

Lets see.

'I didn't even know it was possible...' Harry lamented. Harry looked on the front page to see the mark breakdown.

'Twenty percent! If I don't do well on this question I might not even be able to get an Exceeds Expectations... and transfiguration is fairly important for any Job in the Magical World.' Harry mentally panicked.

'Calm down... there's no point whining.' Harry scolded himself.

'Just think about the question... what would be so bad about creating a living creature...'

Harry was glad he had about an hour left... he spent half of it jotting down any and all ideas he could. He focused mainly on the moral implications of creating life.

'To permanently give life to any form of animal would entail being responsible for it and its progeny. By giving life to an animal that was not naturally alive to begin with the wizard or witch in question are in essence creating a sentient creature. To do so would be irresponsible and would raise esoteric questions of whether at the same instance a soul was created for the new life. We as a society are not yet prepared to take that kind of responsibility.'

Harry was completely making crap up as he went along; but the more he wrote the stronger he felt that even if he was wrong, he would still be right. The Question itself was vague enough to allow for such an answer. Harry left the exam confident that even if his essay wasn't what the examiners were expecting; he was still able to argue his points.

'Who knows...? I might even make an Outstanding' Harry thought sarcastically.

:~::~:

Present Day

Harry had spent the following day after Dumbledore's return, avoiding Hermione.

Ginny who had not been present during the discussion, learned of it through Hermione as they shared a suite with Luna.

Needless to say he tried to avoid her as well.

Harry wasn't sure what side Luna would take but was reasonably sure, she, like Neville, wouldn't pressure Harry for answers.

Harry felt a little guilty for thinking it but 'They aren't close enough to me to demand answers of my personal life, even if they had tagged along to the ministry.'

He would be forever grateful for his friends support that day, but it was never his decision for them to come. They had come of their own free will and Harry would not take responsibility for their actions. He was done blaming himself.

Harry did feel guilty for the thought that always occurred to him though. 'Did they really help me... or hinder me.'

Harry didn't want to sound pompous but the numerous times he reviewed the night he always paused at his quick escape of the department.

He had found away out of the death chamber to the lobby with in minutes of Sirius death... compared to the near half hour trying to regroup and cover his friends backs.

Harry knew that if he went it alone, things would have been very different; not necessarily good either, but every instance he fought alone, he had no one to protect, no one to consider besides his own safety. It had been that way for each and every adventure... he would wind up fighting on his own and he would survive.

He wasn't a team player. He worked best on his own and that was just the way he was. He needed the freedom of being selfish in a fight. He couldn't do that if he had to look after his friends.

"Harry?"

Harry was pulled out of his musings by Ron poking him with his fork. They were currently hiding out in the older wing of the citadel.

The citadel, having not always been an office tower, five hundred years ago when it was originally built, was at first a cathedral style sanctuary not un-similar to the Notre dame. This made the headquarters quite the contrast to behold from the outside, as it was a futuristic office tower emerging from a wondrous multi chambered Cathedral. The cathedral looked almost like Hogwarts in design with its many turrets and grand opulence. It screamed security and protection with an underlying current of danger.

Ron was looking at Harry exasperatedly. "You can't avoid Hermione forever you know."

"I'm not avoiding her... I just wanted to explore the place" Harry said indignantly.

"Sure your not" Neville snorted as he was finishing his breakfast.

Ron and Neville had been banging on Harry's door early in the morning negating his plan of escaping everyone for the day. Harry was grateful that they were not going to interrogate him for information but was a little annoyed that he couldn't get the time to himself he had been planning to have.

Chippy had been only too happy to personally deliver 'The great Harry Potter sir and friends their Breakfast.' She had acted a little funny though when she apprehensively asked them whether they were going to go deeper into the citadel dungeons.

"Fine I'm avoiding her, but can you blame me?" Harry admitted. He was tired of lying to his friends and knew that everyone would figure it out... it didn't bother him as much as he thought it should have.

"Not really... Hermione is fairly stubborn." Ron admitted with a smile. Ron seemed a little more mature to Harry than last year. Harry couldn't help but smile at his care free friend.

“What?”

“You’re not a teaspoon, you’re a ladle!” Harry said smugly.

He was rewarded with a muffin being hucked at his face, and a confused Neville.

“So what you guys want to do, as much fun as hiding out in an empty stone room is, we’re going to have to go up eventually.”

Harry groaned as he knew his friend was right but didn’t want to face Hermione just yet... he may have been a Gryffindor but he still didn’t want to fight this fight.

“Well you three can always do your school shopping early.”

Neville, Harry, and Ron turned around quickly at the authoritative voice of...

“Tonks! Don’t do that...” Ron said exasperatedly. He had been drinking his juice at the moment she surprised him... needless to say, sputtering ensued.

“You know you missed me...” Tonks said fondly as she skipped over. Bob stood rigidly at the base of the stairs heading up to the citadel. His grey overcoat, helping him blend in with the rock wall.

“We see each other far too much as it is.” Harry said. It was meant as a joke but was true none the less. Tonks and Bob had become his permanent body guards for the summer. Harry thought Tonks might have arranged for it, as like them, she didn’t know that many people in the Citadel. Not to say they were close... but they were familiar faces.

Tonks pouted at Harry’s jibe but tussled his hair affectionately any way. Harry was against this on principal as even though his hair was originally messy in nature, he did not need someone help it on its crusade for chaos.

"Well I suppose you three want to hang around here then... alright"
Tonks sighed theatrically as she leaned against a wall.

"What did you mean...?" Ron asked the auror... taking her bait.

"No, you guys made it clear... you don't want to hear my super fantastic suggestion, or see my ultra top secret package from Dumbledore." She said resignedly.

"Come partner... lets not stay where we aren't wanted." Tonks took one last over-the-top saddened glance at the three curious boys before making her way over to Bob.

"Tonks!" Harry said exasperatedly.

"Hmm?" Tonks sounded as she paused her forward momentum.

"I'm sorry I said we saw you too much as it is."

"And..." Tonks Goaded.

"...And we missed you" Ron added helpfully.

"... well I'm still not sure we are wanted here" Tonks said unsurely. As she pouted at them pathetically.

"Oh most definitely..." Neville said assuredly. He had gotten much more comfortable around the easy going witch.

"Ya it's always great to have you around... like a non-stop party it is!"
Ron said getting into the ego rubbing.

"I personally don't know where I would be without your constant sunny disposition." Harry said sarcastically.

"What about my ravishing beauty..." Tonks suggested.

"You're a metamorph?" Ron said bemused.

"Well, a girl still likes to hear the compliment!" Tonks explained testily to Ron's previous comment.

"So sorry Tonks, your beauty is the thing of legends. It makes everyone everywhere jealous, is what it does." Harry said exaggeratedly.

He took a moment to mouth the words "Teaspoon once more" to Ron.

"I'm sorry Harry but you're a bit young for me... one day you might find someone as perfect as I..." Tonks said sympathetically. "Maybe... If you're lucky." She added condescendingly.

Harry rolled his eyes, but felt much better. Tonks always had a way of making troubles disappear. He didn't realize how much energy he spent avoiding confrontations with his friends, until just then.

'...that can't be good'

"Alright since you lot are such sad, lonely men... I might as well share my gossip with you... you don't seem to have much else going for you." She said with a shake of her head.

"Tonks..." Harry warned.

"Now I suggest you lot take this opportunity to go do your school shopping early. Professor Dumbledore took down the lockdown this morning."

Ron gave Neville an excited look at the news. Neville had become a bit more than a room mate after the adventure they shared and being confined together in a military installation had cemented the three as friends.

"... Also I ran into McGonagall and she suggested you all go school shopping now. Hardly anyone will be out and about yet to do theirs as the letters haven't been sent out yet."

"Then how are we supposed to know what to get... we don't even know what courses we have gotten accepted into yet." Ron asked.

She ignored him in favour of pulling out four envelopes from her back pocket.

“I present to you... your O.W.L.’s” She took one envelope away and handed each of them a cream coloured letter.

Each letter had the Hogwarts crest in the top right corner with a shield emblazoned by a stylized owl next to their name in the centre.

On the back was a wax seal with the same owl insignia.

“Where’s Hermione... I’m supposed to give her hers, as well. I’m sure she would love to get her school supplies early.” Tonks questioned the trio.

“Were kind of avoiding the girls today.” Ron winced as he tried to explain the situation.

“What did you do?” Tonks said sternly.

“Oy, we didn’t do anything...”

“That’s what they all say...” Tonks said patronizingly.

“We didn’t...Hermione’s just...” Neville was stopped from telling Tonks by Ron stomping on his foot while shooting Harry pointed looks.

Harry wasn’t saying anything but had a deep scowl plastered across his face.

Tonks seemed to understand that her interference in the matter was not welcome this time.

“Well... I suppose the girls can go later. The letters aren’t being sent out till tomorrow Night.” Tonks attempted to ease their minds.

“But only on one condition!” She said strictly.

“What?” Harry asked apprehensively. He really didn’t want to have the girls shop with them as he was fairly certain Ginny and Hermione would try to double team him for answers. Hermione pulling her Lecturing superior tone on him, and Ginny, her confidant angry one she had used on him in the library and his bedroom at Grimmauld, last year.

Both were equally irritating on their own... but together, they were a recipe for homicide.

“Show me what you guys got on your owls... it’s been killing me.” Tonks begged.

Harry smiled, relieved and amused by her request as they all nodded their heads in acceptance of her bargain.

They all tore open their envelopes and reached in to pull out a yellow parchment.

... ..

Ordinary Wizarding Levels

For

Harry James Potter

Congratulations on the completion of your O.W.L. examinations and fifth year of education. Please note that due to unforeseen circumstances for your owl year students are being allowed to rewrite attempted exams. Any inquiries or appointments should be made to the Wizarding Examination Authority.

Congratulations once more on your achievement and good luck in your N.E.W.T studies.

Sincerely

Professor Griselda Marchbanks

....

O.W.L.'s are the calculated totals to each examinable course.

Outstanding requires a grade of 90 or higher.

Exceeds Expectations require a grade of 75 or higher.

Acceptable requires a grade of 60 or higher.

Poor Requires a grade of 50 or higher.

Dreadful requires a grade less than 50.

Troll requires a grade of 10 or less.

Examination results for Harry James Potter

Examined Course	Practical Exam	Written Exam
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-Owl Achieved

Charms	100	92
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-Outstanding

Defence Against the Dark Arts	101	100
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- Outstanding

Care of Magical Creatures	97	90
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- Outstanding

Transfiguration	100	99
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- Outstanding

Potions	90	73
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Exceeds Expectations

Astronomy	75	78
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Exceeds Expectations

Herbology- - - - - 80- - - - - 75 - - - - -
Exceeds Expectations

Divinations - - - - - 8 - - - - - 1 - - - - -
- - - - -Troll

History - - - - - NA - - - - - Na - - - - -
Exemption

Displayed use of Newt level magic. Bonus Marks Given.

Due to extenuating circumstances Student was unable to complete exam. Please Contact the Wizing Examination Authority to schedule a re-examination.

.....

Harry read over his exam marks once more and slowly started to smile.

‘Not so bad...’ Harry congratulated himself. Harry’s potion marks were a little disappointing but much better than he would have expected... transfiguration was the surprise as he was worried he might not have been able to achieve an exceeds.

Harry turned around to take a look at his friend’s faces to find equally pleased looks.

“Enough of this, give em here.” Tonks snatched each paper out of their hands with inhuman speed, and spent the next few seconds scrutinizing each and every detail of their O.W.L.’s

Tonks whistled appreciatively as she looked over the results. “And here I thought you three were Gryffindor’s... Ravenclaw’s are what you are. Excellent work boys.” Tonks congratulated the group.

“But... how did you all manage a Troll for Divinations?” She questioned in surprise.

“You too...” Ron cheered.

Harry couldn't help but smile at Ron's wide grin. "Yup... only 9 " Harry said proudly.

"Same...what bout you Neville?"

"Well... I got 8" Neville Blushed.

"Damn! He beat us..." Harry deadpanned.

"Hold up... you two aren't upset?" Tonks questioned the pair.

"Why would we be... its not like Trelawney actually ever taught us anything." Harry said bitterly.

"Woooo... you will be impaled while tying your shoelaces in the quidditch pitch." Ron moaned in exaggeration of their divinations Teacher.

"It can't be that bad..." Tonks smiled at the pair.

"That was one of her predictions she used on Harry." Ron corrected.
"Minus the woooo bit."

Tonks could only snort in amusement.

"Well my prophetically challenged friends... let us get you some books, then. Your looks will only get you so far..."

:-...-...-...-:-

They had portkeyed into the leaky cauldron and made their way to the brick wall entrance of the magical alley.

Harry prepared himself for his re entrance into the magical world. Adjusting his hair to cover his scar as much as possible and slouching; Harry waited for the sudden wave of noise signalling the barriers disappearance.

He heard the deaf grinding of stones and the vacuum of silence the three had enjoyed behind the brick wall dissolve away as yells of wizards and witches selling their wares filled their ear drums.

Tonks took up a rear position while Bob went up front and lead the group to the white stone bank.

Harry was a little surprised that nothing had changed... a little part of him had thought that maybe the alley might be slightly sombre or quieter on the wake of Voldemorts exposure.

'Exactly the same...' Harry at first took this as a sign that the wizarding public was not taking the situation seriously...but then realized, not everything has to always change.

:~::~:

Harry had taken his time exchanging a hefty sum of galleons into pounds... It did not seem to dent his mound of Gold in his Vault but Harry knew that it was a significant amount none the less.

He wanted to have the option of travelling into the muggle world, and money was always helpful in both worlds. He thought he might need to open up an account in a muggle bank as carrying around wads of money, just screamed rob me.

Harry was eager to leave the bank as the goblins seemed more testy than usual.

Each goblin seemed to sneer at anything that moved. Harry also noticed the bank was unusually busy...

'must be overworked...'

:~::~:

Harry, Ron, and Neville went to Flourish and Blots first, where they asked for the sixth year course books.

They picked up their grade 6 charms text, their transfiguration book, and their other course books. They avoided Divinations and history; although Ron and Neville did get a P and A respectively in history of magic, they both decided they could get sleep in their own bed, instead of their own seats. What surprised them all was the lack of defence text. Usually by now the books were already shelved and ready to be sold.

“You think Dumbledore couldn’t find anyone this year?” Ron asked.

Harry could only shrug in response as he continued to browse the defence section for titles he had not heard of before. He found a heavy encyclopaedia style book with spell name, wand movements, and effect listed alphabetically and by severity.

He thought this kind of book was much more his style of read. He didn’t need a long winded chapter on why the spell worked the way it did. He needed a quick and concise description of spells and how to perform them. He needed to learn as much magic he could use in a fight as possible if he was to survive Voldemort. Not learn the mechanics of it.

Harry started to head to the front desk to pay for his things but stopped as a book caught his eye.

Harry eyed the sixth year potions text blankly. ‘I didn’t make the grade, no way Snape will take me... I don’t need to be an auror anymore to get training... Dumbledore is starting it in two days...’

Harry contemplated the book for a few minutes but picked it up in the end. Even though Snape refused to teach him, he could teach himself.

He didn’t have any expectation of becoming a potions master... but he did think he was capable of making a few healing drafts. His O.W.L. mark seemed to indicate he wasn’t a complete failure in the subject.

As Harry was paying for his purchases... It truly hit him... ‘I can’t become an auror.’

‘Shouldn’t I be a little bit more disappointed?’

Harry wasn’t experiencing any of the crushing anxiety he had expected. If he was honest with himself... he felt, lighter.

Harry was woken from his introspection by the bright purple hair of his bodyguard, making its way towards him.

“Alright kiddies... lets get you some big boy clothes and then you can do whatever else you want here.”

Ron scowled at being referred to as kiddies, but followed along obediently as she led them through the crowds of Diagon Alley. He did however easily cheer up as he had a sac full of galleons for once. If the war had any good attributes to it, it was helping the Weasley family. With Mrs. Weasley pulling hours in the hospital wing and Mr. Weasley doing whatever he did nowadays... the family now had a reasonable amount of money to spend. Harry was proud of his friend as he hadn’t gloated about it as he thought he once might have.

Memories of Ron questioning his farther on winning more money after their fortuitous luck the summer of third year sprang to mind.

:~::~:

“Finally!” One of the three called as they plopped themselves down into the benches outside Fortescues.

The three plus two bodyguards had finished their rounds for supplies and decided to treat themselves to a sugar boost before they could enjoy the rest of their day.

“I think that little girl recognized you...” Ron smiled at his scruffy haired friend.

“Why would you say that?” Harry questioned as he unnecessarily checked his bags for his school things.

“Maybe it was because she squealed and tackle hugged you...” Neville teased.

“...or because she demanded you marry her this instant...” Ron added.

“I don’t see where you’re going with this...” Harry said with a straight face. He had expected this since exiting Malkins. A six or seven year old girl with blond ponytails and a bubble gum pink dress pulled a dobbie and clung to his legs demanding his undying love.

“That doesn’t seem unusual to you?” Ron asked patronizingly.

“No... I get that from women a lot. It’s my charm...” Harry said in his best Malfoy impersonation.

Once he stopped getting mortified by his fame... small instances like these amused him in hindsight.

He was rewarded for his impersonation by having sprinkles tossed at him.

“So other than having Casanova here amuse us with his many exploits... what do you guys want to do?” Tonks questioned as she stole a spoon full of vanilla from Harry’s cup.

Harry warily watched Ron as he expected him to demand they be allowed to go to Quality Quidditch. He wasn’t sure what Neville did but didn’t think him that much of a quidditch fan.

“Ron turned to Neville. “Muggle world?” At Neville’s healthy nod Ron turned to Harry silently asking for his opinion. Harry was pleasantly surprised but agreed with out preamble.

The quintuplet made their way to the leaky cauldron where Tonks, shrunk their purchases and hid them in Bobs overcoat.

Tonks did a quick shift into a young ebony haired woman who could have passed for Harry’s older sister.

She hooked hands with Neville making the teen blush and marched them into the muggle world. Bob following along at a slightly faster pace than usual as he tried to keep close to the four.

The moment they exited the unseen pub Harry was reminded of his first trip with Hagrid to the magical world. He hadn't seen the outside of the leaky cauldron since and it was every bit of a dive as he remembered it.

Harry, and Ron quickly lead the group to the sidewalk where they perused shop names. Every now and then Ron or Neville would question Harry on an interesting shop but they had retained some knowledge from their daily trips to the beach town near the citadel.

Harry learned that Neville was a music enthusiast as he quickly asked to visit a store he recognized from the coves commercial district.

Harry questioned him on whether he played any instruments, but Neville admitted quickly he never learned. Harry was a little amused by his friend, as he went straight to the oldies section and pulled out some vinyl records Harry recognized from the 70's, by their washed out colors and bubble letters.

Ron amused himself by trying out the listening stations and commenting on how strange some of the music was loudly to the store as he listened to it. Tonks surprised them all by perusing the classical music. Harry couldn't imagine the visually shocking auror to be a symphony lover.

Bob stood silently by the entrance often confusing shoppers into thinking he was security.

:~::~~::~~::~~::~~:::

The four made their way out of the store a good hour later with Neville having Harry purchase him a record labelled 'the kinks'. Harry being the only one with muggle money; Harry quickly eased his friends mind after he promised to pay him back the sixth time.

stance while herding the trio away from the girl. The boys all kept their hands on their wands as they watched the girl warily and wondered how they were ousted.

‘Did I do accidental magic?’ Harry thought.

Bob aimed his wand at the girl discreetly as she continued her hurried pace. There was a noticeable ripple in the crowd of muggles as a few more turned their heads at the girl's excited statement and looked in their directions... Some held wide eyes while some like the girl started to make their way hurriedly toward the group.

“God Damn it! Here you three, I’m going to portkey you out of here. On 5 it will take you to the boardroom in the citadel... inform Dumbledore we got an exposure situation. You got that” Tonks hurriedly questioned as she pulled out a metal object that looked like a 10 way brass knuckle.

“What about you...” Ron asked hurriedly. Harry guessed for Ron and Neville this was like a nightmare gone horribly wrong. To be the ones caught by muggles as witches and wizards must have been every purebloods worst nightmare.

“We got to contain the situation as much as we can... now line...up?” Tonks trailed off as the little girl and her mother ran past them followed by an ever growing handful of people. They ran right by the previously panicking group up the street..

Harry looked toward where they were going and openly gaped.

There dressed in black and cream colored business attire, were a pair of women who were openly transfiguring a penny into balloons for a group of ever growing children.

“Ohhh...” Neville said in relieved comprehension.

“Is that one of them?” Ron asked a little star struck. Harry blinked confusedly for a few seconds before he realized that neither women were carrying wands.

"There the 78000?" he said in startled realization. He was a little bit more shocked by the fact that he had just walked right by the two and never considered it. There were no distinguishable marks of any kind to mark them as different. He had actually thought the two were middle aged secretaries or office workers just finishing work.

"Errr... right... doesn't matter you three...we have standing orders to stay away from them... we're getting out of here." With that she pulled Harry and Neville towards the entrance of the leaky cauldron and had them cling to the brass knuckled portkey before rapidly counting to 5.

Harry felt the tugging sensation he had associated with portkey travel tug on his organs as he was pulled into a blinding swirl of colors and spit out onto the floor of the boardroom. Neville and Ron ended up dog piling him as they arrived and leaving Harry sore all over.

"Mr. Potter, is everything alright down their."

Harry recognized the voice of Dumbledore ask as he fought to regain footing.

"Sorry proffes....or" Harry blushed slightly as he took in the table full of what looked like dignitaries watching him, some with amused smiles, others stern scowls disapproving of their entrance.

"Oh, Don't mind them Mr. Potter the meeting was coming to a close, but I assume because you portkeyed here, you three used the emergency portkey... I must know the situation." Dumbledore said authoritatively... all traces of the jovial old man vanishing immediately.

"right... um we were in muggle London when we ran into two of the 78000 Tonks lead us to the leaky Cauldron and portkeyed us away as a crowd was forming." Harry said quickly.

"How did you know they were 78000 Mr. Potter" a familiar voice weeded from across the table.

"They were transfiguring things into balloons for some children..." Harry trailed off as he turned to see the familiar lime green bowler hat

of minister Fudge. Harry scowled at the minister openly as he had not intended to ever see the man again after last year.

'little man must have been released already... shame'

"Thank you Mr. Potter, I'm sorry if this may seem rude but I must attend to the matter immediately. Please find your own way back to your quarters." The professor said kindly if not quickly as he watched the minister start to bluster.

Harry with the help of Ron Pulled Neville up off the floor and made their way to their rooms to the shouting of the minister exclaiming how he would show those muggles.

:~::~~::~~::~~::~~::~~:::

The trio made their way to their suits, discussing the events of their afternoon.

"How do you think they managed it." Ron asked

"I'm not sure, I never saw any kind of wand on them... can magic be done with out a wand" Harry asked curiously.

"No, its not possible for us to do any kind of focused magic with out them... or something like them." Neville explained patiently.

"You think the muggles figured out a way?" Ron asked in awe.

"No. I remember one of grans friends telling me about why we need wands. Something about magical poisoning and stuff like that... she was a retired unspeakable." Neville explained.

As they reached their door Harry remembered the glow he noticed around the women's sleeve he saw on the TV.

"Where on earth were you three?" a shrill screech echoed around the walls as they entered their shared common room.

'And it begins...'

"Hello Hermione... how was your day?" Harry said tiredly as Ron and Neville winced in sync.

"Don't Hello Hermione me... where were you?" She demanded. Hermione was striding forward from a table with a pile of books, while Ginny got up from the couch she had been sitting on next to Luna with.

Ginny quickly adopted a pose similar to that of her mothers and looked at the three sternly.

Harry was a little concerned by the fact that Luna hadn't turned her head or done anything to acknowledge their presence.

"We just went to get our school supplies... Neville said helpfully if not a little meekly.

Even though Neville had developed his confidence quite a bit since they first met... girls were still his weakness. Especially angry ones.

"What are you talking about, we haven't even gotten our letters yet... you don't know what to get." Hermione argued snappishly.

"Tonks gave us our O.W.L.'s in the morning..." Ron added unhelpfully.

'Damn...' Harry knew what was going to come next.

"WHAT! Why didn't she give me mine!" Hermione boomed. Everyone in the room winced at her tone of voice.

"She was with us all day." Harry said firmly. Hermione turned her ire to Harry and paused at the angry stare she was receiving back.

She seemed to consider her actions for a moment before resolutely raising her chin and staring Harry down.

"What did you get"

"For?"

“Your O.W.L.’s”

“7”

“what subjects?”

“Charms, Potions, Transfiguration, Defence, Herbology, Astronomy, and Hagrid’s class.”

“how many O’s?”

“Enough...”

She paused to glare irritated at him for not telling her but said nothing.

“Why were you avoiding me?”

“What were you going to ask me when you saw me this morning.”

“What professor Dumbledore told you in his office...”

“That’s why”

“You shouldn’t hide things from your friends...”

“My friends shouldn’t pry into my private matters”

“Friends don’t keep secrets...”

“Why didn’t you tell me and Ron about the Time Turner?”

“That was different... it was important to keep it a secret.”

“How do you know my secret isn’t the same?”

“Do you have a time turner?”

“No”

“Then its not the same...”

“Says the person who doesn’t know what the secret is.”

Harry knew that was a little bit of a jibe but this interrogation was quickly ruining his mood. Hermione coloured brightly but said nothing of the matter.

There was an awkward pause where no one said anything; everyone’s eyes were on the pair of muggle raised hot heads. Neither had so openly fought in front of so many friends before, and neither had ever been this heated.

“Show me your O.W.L.’s”

“Excuse me?”

“Give me your O.W.L.’s I want to see them.”

Ron and Neville were automatically reaching into their back and jacket pockets retrieving them at her command.

“No.”

“Excuse me?”

“I said no.”

“If you don’t show me, I’ll just assume you did horribly...”

“That’s fine”

Hermione grit her teeth as she had expected Harry to cave in after being confronted with being deemed inadequate. To be honest she had expected him to cave in the moment she had yelled at him.

“Show me your results Harry”

“I already told you, no.”

“Neville, what did he get?”

Harry was incensed that Hermione would try to subvert his wishes so.

“Harry said he doesn’t want you to know... I couldn’t tell you even if I knew”

Harry was impressed and grateful for Neville’s show of support. He had stuttered his response but he had still stood his ground for him. Harry sent Neville a thankful head nod while sending Hermione a scathing look.

“I think you should go.”

“What?” The girl asked in surprise.

“I think you should go... I’m not in the mood to deal with you after that”

“You can’t kick us out” Hermione asked in outrage.

“It’s our suite, and I agree with Harry... you went too far Hermione.” Ron said in support as he stood to the right of Harry crossing his arms. “Besides we aren’t kicking everyone out... just you.”

Hermione looked hurt but turned her stare toward the last male.
“Neville?”

Neville panicked but did not look in Hermione’s direction as he said...

“It’s 2 to 3... I’m not voting anyway... good night” Neville all but vanished as he sprinted to the closest room which was conveniently his to begin with.

An awkward silence continued before Hermione huffed and went back to her table and gathered a pile of books, and stormed past the duo. Knocking shoulders with Harry as she shoved past them.

Ginny looked panicky between Hermione and Harry but wisely decided to just follow the previous girl and exited without preamble.

Luna slowly stood and smoothed down her long white skirt and frilly knitted sweater. She gathered what Harry guessed was her traveler bag and slowly made her way toward the door.

"Luna, you don't have to go." Harry said calmly. He had noticed that the girl had not shown any reaction to Harry whatsoever and worried he might have hurt her feelings.

She paused at his words... each facing the opposite direction. Luna, the door; Harry, the couch she had been occupying.

"I wouldn't have questioned you, you know?"

"I know"

"Good... Goodnight Ronald... Harry..."

And with that she left the room.

AN: This is becoming all angsty... damn. I guess I naturally write the junk. I said earlier that I would try to write Hermione to be less bashable... that will come, but it was necessary for her to react this way for future events in my outline.

For those of you worried Rons going to be all supportive of Harry for everything... wait till next chapter. Rons going to be a good character in my story but that doesn't mean he will agree with Harry on everything. Just wait and see...

I think I finally got my Neville persona right. Your going to get a lot of his character next chapter and see some insight into his character.

Luna... Luna acted the way I thought Luna would react but I can understand if you guys are worried shes becoming a bit angsty as well. I'll give you a little insight into my luna.

She does believe in all the stuff she talks about... whether they are true or not whose to say. But she is also a teen girl who is trying to

find acceptance in her peer group. Harry's friends are accepting of her... mostly.... And she has never had that.

Try and place yourself in the mind of that Luna. My Luna is a free spirit but she is also Lonely.

Anyway... the last bit I thought I should address was Harry's fantastic grades. The practical stuff for most of the exams I figured were spells he had already learned and as McGonagall has demonstrated in cannon, "you don't get it right in class you keep studying it until you do or I ride your arse to France." The only way to loose marks for a practical is to not know how to do a spell, or to do it incorrectly in some fashion. The Written stuff is the part where I figure most of the marks will depend upon. As examiners become nitpicky. There is a reason why I included the first bit of this chapter. It will show up later but you guys will probably already be able to figure it out. Theory is not even covered in the exam Umbridge!.

Other than that... Hermione doesn't seem the type to not force her friends and any other passer-by to study when exams approach and especially not with O.W.L.'s.

Also My Harry is smart... I'm not going to deny it, he is just used to being put down so he always expects less from his efforts. This is also going to factor into my story. Harry's got to have some stuff going for him ...

Anyway... another long Authors Note...points to anyone who can guess what minor detail I mentioned in this chapter will play into the next. Hint: has to do with Neville.

glow letting him know that the extra security features... which included a hefty locking spell secured the flat.

“You’re the Teaspoon!”

Harry warily turned his head toward the quite but angry voice of his only vocal defender for the night. ‘What now...’

“huh?”

“Teaspoon... You.... Not me!” This helpful sentence was followed by even more helpful hand gestures, before Ron decided to awkwardly tried to also try and take on his mothers angry posture. Harry briefly wondered why everyone tried to adopt her standing gestures when they were angry.

“Why am I suddenly the Teaspoon?” Harry cautiously questioned his best mate.

“Why did you have to do that... You dragged me and Neville into this... now were going to have to choose sides.” Ron started to pace back and forth around the coffee table in front of the same fluffy white couch Luna and Ginny had been sitting on earlier. He seemed to realise his earlier attempts to intimidate using the Molly Weasley method were inadequate at best.

“I didn’t drag you two in... Hermione did” Harry defensively added.

“Rubbish... You dragged us in when you kicked her out.” The pacing was starting to make Harry slightly dizzy. This whole evening was making him dizzy.

“As I remember it... you agreed with me.” He reminded.

“I may have agreed with you... but I shouldn’t have taken sides... Neville was smart, he didn’t.” Ron admitted tiredly. He stopped his pacing and plopped back down on the couch. Taking on a pensive posture as he slouched forward, and rubbed the right side of his forehead while squinting at the empty glass vase that Neville had been stealing orchids from.

“Why now Harry... she’s been like this since we met her... why did you have to start now.” Ron asked sadly. Harry’s growing aggravation abated at his friends almost pleading tone as he contemplated the empty vase.

“Ron... I’m sorry. But I just don’t want to be bossed around anymore.” Harry tried to explain to his friend.

“Surely you know... with growing up with so many brothers and Ginny, privacy’s important. I need my privacy Ron... It’s not like very much of my life is very private to begin with.” Ending quietly but bitterly Harry took a seat next to his room mate. Leaning back fully letting his spine model itself to the contours of the couch as his neck swivelled to allow him an uninterrupted view of the ceiling. A soft yellow glow from the room lamp creating splotchy shadows that stretched away into the furthest reaches of the light.

“I don’t blame you for wanting your privacy Harry... To tell you the truth I was rooting you on back there when you stood your ground. But the way you did it... we’ll be lucky if she talks to us by September first... if not Christmas....”

Ron paused his speech as he formulated his response.

“All I know is... That may have not been the worst way to handle the situation... but it sure wasn’t the best.”

“I know...” Harry admitted. He wasn’t going to tell Ron that he would do it all over again in a heart beat but he was sufficiently remorseful to sympathise with Ron’s plight. To be fair Harry had placed his friends in a tricky bind by forcing his room mates to take sides in his dispute with Hermione. Ginny seemed to stick with the female solidarity ... however reluctantly and Ron with the male. Luna and Neville being the new additions to the group no matter how unofficially, managed to gain an awkward neutral territory, as they neither supported or condemned Harry and Hermione’s split.

Although each had their own issues to pick with either member.

himself on his next course of action but decided he had to suck it in as he wasn't willing to face down the angry female glares he was expecting.

"Chippy? You awake?"

"Good morning Master Harry Sir." The cheery little elf popped in.

"Sorry if this is too early but... is there anyway you could tell me if Hermione is awake? Hermione Granger... the girl I eat with..."

"Oh Chippy knows who young master is be talking bouts." The excitable elf said in a less happy kind of growl. 'S.P.E.W. strikes again I see'

"ah, yea... do you think I could bother you to check with out waking her if she is sleeping..." Harry asked apprehensively. Harry didn't think the girl in question would be too thrilled with Harry using Chippy this way either... but one issue at a time.

"Of course master Harry sir..."

"... If you could do it without being seen that would be great" Harry added in quickly. Harry wasn't sure if the little elf caught all that, as she had already popped out of existence, but held out hope that she would be discreet.

POP

"She is being awake master Harry sir... she is be reading." Chippy said immediately.

'Excellent.'

"Thanks Chippy" Harry checked his watch he had recently had repaired on one of his excursions into the muggle world. 'Still got 20 minutes...'

"Chippy... if you could watch over the food I made and keep it warm I'd be really grateful."

“Oh young master needn’t worry. Chippy be doing it right away.”

“Thanks... help yourself if you’re hungry... I know there’s plenty.” Harry called as he made his way out the door.

He could faintly hear Chippy go into one of her classical crying fits about how wonderful he was to her as he was already making his way down to the portkey transport pads.

:~::~~::~~::~~::~~:::

KNOCK

KNOCK

KNOCK

“One minute...” a muffled voice echoed behind the wooden door.

“Yes can I... Oh... it’s you.” Hermione started to frown at her long time friend.

“Ah ... yeah... its me.” Harry said awkwardly. Harry had hoped Hermione had cooled down slightly and would be as embarrassed as he was by the situation... but if she was, she was hiding it extremely well behind her mask of apathy, and distaste.

“Can I come in?” Harry asked awkwardly as the silence stretched on.

Hermione raised her eyebrow in a mocking gesture; silently asking whether he was seriously asking her that.

“Right... I deserve that I guess. Anyway I came by now to see if we could resolve this thing now before it gets out of hand.” Harry said reluctantly. It always seemed like he was the one who was doing the apologizing and being the responsible one to set the good example. This was eating at him particularly as he was still convinced that he was in the right of last evening.

He was only doing this because his argument as Ron had pointed out was dragging everyone else into it. He didn't want this to become some teenage drama fest where the boys and the girls would be in heated dispute with each other. It sickened him just thinking about it. He was sure the boys would win hands down... but that was besides the point.

Hermione stared at Harry with her eye brow still raised in defiance.

Slowly it started to lower as her face took on a more contrite appearance.

"I guess I was a bit out of line yesterday."

“As was I... Can we just forget about last night and put it behind us... I made breakfast in our suite... I'd really like it if you and the girls would join us.”

In all honesty asking the girls to join them had been a last minute addition to his plan as he had made one too many pancakes as he aimlessly tended the gas stoves. It was a good Idea to include the other three but the original was mainly for Neville and Ron in apology.

Hermione smiled warmly at Harry. "I guess we could do that... The girls shouldn't be up for another...half hour... lets say we meet you boys at 8?"

"I'll keep Ron away from your stack of pancakes till then." Harry said in appreciation.

As Harry jauntily made his way back towards his room; still proud that his hastily cooked up plan had worked... an annoying little voice in the back of his mind whispered ...

'This isn't over yet.'

■ ■ ■ ■ ■

Harry made it back just as Neville had peeked his head outside his door.

“Neville... hey!” Harry said hurriedly in greeting.

“Harry... what are you doing up so early.” Neville said wide eyed. He was already dressed and carrying around a large highly polished black box with a silver handle. It was slightly too big to be a briefcase. Harry thought about asking him about it but by the way Neville tried to move it behind him... Harry could tell that this was one of those secrets Harry had argued for the right to have the night before.

“No reason... well couldn’t sleep much... Neville...um... well look, I’m sorry about last night, I shouldn’t have dragged you and Ron into this.”

“Its okay...” Neville said noncommittally as he looked away from Harry. He seemed to sniff the air and perk up slightly.

“Oh yea I made us all breakfast as a kind of sorry for the drama. I made up with Hermione just now and the girls should be here by 8...”

Neville noticeably relaxed as he smiled a relieved smile. “Oh that’s great.”

Harry thought Neville had been a little more worried about the fight than he had let on.

“Now all we need to do is keep Ron away from the food till then.” Harry reminded his friend in worry as rons door handle gave an ominous creak.

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Breakfast had been a strange affair. The girls had shown up and Ron had dug in with relish as he was all but being restrained from his food.

That was the only truly normal thing about it. Everyone spoke in cheery strained tones... afraid to break the peace. Hermione asking inconsequential things trying to avoid the subject all together. Ginny laughing hysterically at almost any half wit joke, Neville smiling uncomfortably to all, and Luna...

Luna had been normal for Luna in many ways... she spoke frequently about mysterious unknown creatures and conspiracies and did little rituals with her salt and fork to ward away the lepticules...

But there was something missing in her interactions. It was a closeness she had begun to develop with the members of the table. She was still cordial but she was back to just being dreamy.

Harry reflected on how disappointing it was; but quickly regained his focus as he dodged another red spell and lost consciousness.

Harry blearily opened his eyes to find the stern taskmaster of a trainer standing above him. He had been pulled away by a yawning Tonks who told him he was expected on the forth floor to start his training.

Harry thought she should have called it torture.

"So this is the great Harry Potter... well, you aren't bad... but you certainly aren't very good either." His instructor criticized, oddly paraphrasing Ron.

Harry had gotten used to the mans acerbic comments after he was knocked unconscious for the third time.

The man who had ordered Harry to call him "Sir", had started out by having Harry shoot every known spell he could think to use in a fight, at 8 separate glass balls that ended up glowing a pale yellow at the end of the exercise. Which also left Harry feeling like he had, had all his blood leached out of him.

After that he had been given a bright aqua potion and a glass of water. The potion which surprisingly tasted good, no flavour that he could really identify, but just sent pleasant tingles down his tongue; caused him to feel like he could climb the wall with his bare hands.

After which he had duelled 'sir', then 'a nameless order member', then both. Then two nameless order members... and so forth till time seemed to just bleed away.

Each time finding himself outcold within 15 minutes.

“Alright grab another potion and stand on the black circle in the corner of the room.” The man said tirelessly.

Harry obediently obeyed as he had learned quickly, dilly dallying did him no favors with this instructor.

The room itself was the size of a slightly large gym. Ropes and pullies decorated the walls, attached to varying weights and other twirling shiny objects similar to what he had destroyed in Dumbledore’s Office. The roof that was a good 3 stories up was littered with hundreds of thousands, if not millions of small grey circles extruded downwards. A large white sphere halfway protruding from the centre of the ceiling.

Harry quickly but painfully grabbed a potion and sprinted over to the indicated black circle. It was about 12 feet in diameter and unremarkable as far as Harry could discern.

That’s why Harry knew he was going to be in a lot of pain soon.

“Alright Potter, we are going to start you off by having you defend yourself while in an enclosed space.” At this he swished his long cream coloured wand in Harry’s general direction. Instantly the black lines around Harry turned blue and rose quickly toward the ceiling where it seemed to fade into nothingness before it reached the tips of the circles.

Harry looked around himself to see any change in his surroundings. The only difference he could tell was that the circle he was standing in was a navy blue and it seemed to move slowly toward the centre of the room.

Harry looked up toward his smirking trainer in question. “sir?”

All Harry got in response was a disturbing smirk and a mocking salute.

Harry heard a fizzling sound from behind him and turned slowly to see what was making the noise.

Harry was heartened by the fact that at least he had been able to endure the hellish training up until the very end. While not lifting weights or exercising in the conventional sense... it left him drained in ways that were reminiscent of his experiences duelling Voldemort at the end of forth year. He was reasonably sure not everyone could last as long as he.

Harry opened the door to his suite to find Ron sitting alone on the couch. He lay sprawled with appendages hanging limply at his sides as he dangled his foot back and forth.

At the sound of the door opening He perked up immediately and looked towards Harry in unmitigated glee.

"Harry!" he cheered.

"What's going on Ron...?" Harry asked cautiously at his unnaturally chipper welcome.

"I'm so bloody bored. The girls left to go do their shopping and haven't stopped by." Ron practically bounced around Harry in unused energy.

"What about Neville?"

"Haven't seen him since this morning... disappeared on me saying he had some errands to do for his gran." Ron explained as his movements started to slow from his over exuberant greeting.

"Huh... alright."

"Oh you should continue to avoid Hermione for a while..." Ron quickly said.

"What why...?" Harry asked in surprise. 'I haven't seen her since this morning. What could I have done?'

"Tonks told her what you got for transfiguration... bloody photographic memory she has." Ron whistled appreciatively.

Harry was a little miffed as he had hoped to keep his marks hidden at least until Hermione asked him nicely. He reigned in his pout and queried...

"Well still why is she mad...? I think I did pretty well." Harry said. Outstanding at near hundred percent in total was quite the achievement if Harry said so himself.

"That's the thing... you did too well... how did you get 99 on the practical anyway?"

"wait what do you mean too well?"

"You beat her mate... by a 4 percent... in her subject... she was practically fuming when she found out." Harry gawked at him in surprise. 'I beat Hermione ...' Harry thought excitedly... he had never really beat Hermione grade wise for anything except defence and that had quickly lost its novelty after Hermione started an outright competition for... 'I beat Hermione' Harry rethought in horror.

Ron patted him gently on the shoulder in a supportive nature.

"Your so doomed." He helpfully added.

:~::~~::~~::~~::~~:::

Ron explained to Harry over a game of wizards chess after he had sufficiently regained the use of his mouth... the events of the day.

Fudge had apparently stormed the street the evening before, that held the two 78000 women who were creating balloons for the children, with the intent of arresting and obliterating the people near by.

It had not gone as he had planned as by 10:30pm he was back in a holding cell and all of London (excluding the purely magical sections) had suppressor fields activated. The entire island was one giant magical dead zone until further notice and it was guessed that if fudge was ever released he would face the wizengamont and probably be in Azkaban for sheer incompetence. The order had

assumed control... effectively making Dumbledore the minister of magic until the end of next week where the wizengamont would re elect a new minister.

Surprisingly the Order were of two minds on this as it both made their job easier and disturbing.

Tonks had whispered to everyone that while making it practically impossible for muggles to be attacked magically it also gave Voldemort ample opportunity to study the field, and perhaps find a way around it.

After explaining to Harry the major details Harry waved off another game. He was still a bit sore after all the exercise his body had been forced to endure that day. He decided to take a stroll to the hospital wing, before heading off to bed. He hoped they would be able to help him not hurt all over.

He walked down the empty corridors... while the tower was still active at night; it was a skeleton crew that actually worked the twilight hours. Healers... a couple scientists, and order guards, wandered the halls infrequently.

As he made his way to the emergency station at the corner of his floor he saw a large white sign posted along its glass walls.

Down for maintenance... please use portkey pad to Hospital floor for service

Harry wearily made his way to the portkey pad indicated and called out... "Main hospital wing"

The pad hummed into activation and quickly activated dragging him by his naval to the top floor.

Harry had to admit, standing on the portkey did help him not trip when he arrived but left him with an odd sense of motion sickness, he couldn't attribute to normal ones.

He arrived in a bright tan-grey linoleum corridor with glass walls and white checkered ceilings. Some of the walls were blackened to allow privacy for their occupants... some crystal clear allowing him an unimpeded view of the small room with a bed and artificial magical window that constantly displayed a cheery scene. Right now showing varying scenes of night as it was about 9:45.

“Harry ...? Is everything all right dear?” Harry turned just in time to watch as Mrs. Weasley pulled out her wand and waved it around Harry in familiar motions he was used to seeing Madame Pomfrey perform. It was a little odd for Harry to consider The Weasley matriarch a certified healer... he honestly always pictured Mrs. Weasley a house wife who stayed at home all evening taking care of the kids and doing other stereotypical duties. He was glad Hermione or Mrs. Weasley couldn't hear his thoughts.

“Oh it's nothing really. I just got back from training and I was wondering if you had anything here to help my soreness.”

Mrs Weasley immediately stiffened... “What kind of training was it?” she asked sternly. She had been informed of Harry's need to be trained and had voiced her objection to def ears.

Harry hesitantly told her that it was “Level 2” according to his taskmaster.

“Level 2...” she said sternly. Harry could see all kinds of disapproval waiting to unleash itself from her mouth but she held it in with a scowl and indicated for Harry to seat himself on what looked like a standard muggle gurney placed on the side of the long corridor. The mattress even crinkled as he sat on its sterile surface.

She mumbled constantly about insane headmasters and impetuous foolish youth as she poked and prodded Harry with her wand and varying instruments Madame Pomfrey seemed to lack.

At the end of the thorough examination she placed a hand on a white paneled cupboard and unlocked whatever latches were present, before handing Harry a bottle full of liquid gel tablets.

“These are muscle relaxants and protein supplement potions... take four of these in the morning before you start and another 2 in the evening before you go to sleep. If your going to take a hot shower or bath take the pills 5 minutes in to the shower or bath and stay in for 10 minutes longer. I’ve placed a temporary numbing field around your joints that will last till morning. Come to me if you get any nose bleeds or feel lethargic” She explained professionally. If Harry had any doubt left that she was really a healer, they had been dashed away at her skilled technique... Harry still had no clue what she was doing but he was suitably impressed.

“Alright dear you’re ready to go... if you want to stop in and wish Neville a good night, I saw him over by the windows.” She pointed down a corridor that ended in the same characteristic glass walls with large glass doors that separated the hall from what Harry could see was a wide open terrace.

Harry nodded his head not giving way to his surprise, and thanked the women before cautiously making his way over to the indicated area.

Harry soundlessly padded the lonely corridor to only stop in awkward and guilty surprise at the site he was seeing.

Out on the terrace, Neville was taking a large blanket and with the aid of another healer, wrapping it around a patient. The patient was a long slightly greying woman with a round face.

Harry watched as they seated the woman, who was now snugly wrapped in a pale blue blanket in a white lounge chair. The man patted Neville on the back and handed him the black box Neville had been hiding earlier in the morning.

As the man waved his goodbyes and headed toward the glass door Neville paled as he spotted Harry waiting on the other side.

“Oh... excuse me there young man” the Healer said jovially as he opened the door and held it open for Harry to enter.

Harry looked at the man blankly and walked in nodding his thanks mindlessly.

Harry and Neville stared at each other. One in embarrassment... the other in shamed guilt.

"Neville, I'm sorry... I didn't realize you were... that is to say... Mrs. Weasley just told me you were here and I ..." Harry stuttered trying to explain his voyeurism.

Neville continued to stare at Harry no longer pale in embarrassed shock but with a contemplative stare.

"Look I'm really sorry... I'll just be..."

"Did you know that our mums were room mates in Hogwarts."

Harry paused at the sudden information. He had never actually thought about his mothers social life as he had already met the marauders; he had just assumed that they had all gotten along.

"No I didn't"

"Neither did I... When me and gran moved over here" Neville waved his hands along the walls indicating the citadel. "Professor Dumbledore said that he was willing to allow my parents a permanent home here as well." Neville explained to a silent Harry.

Harry for his part slowly walked closer to the mother and son pair. Listening in as Neville compulsively tucked in his quite semi conscious mother.

"The healer you just saw was actually my mums' first boyfriend" Neville laughed a little bitterly as he raised his black Box onto a small little side table.

Harry watched as Neville turned left and reached for a black gym bag that lay limply on the floor.

“He told me that when he and mum were dating... your mum and mine were the best of friends. Lilly Evans, the shy quiet girl who was slightly adventurous when the moment called for it; and Alice McKinnon the loud passionate women with a fiery temper and a penitent for breaking the rules.” Neville said in wonder.

Harry was equally surprised by the description as it seemed to match him when he first started Hogwarts. Although clashed spectacularly with Neville.

For some reason... maybe because of the pensieve memory he had witnessed, he assumed his mum would be the one with the fiery temper. ‘I guess people change...’ Harry thought reasonably as he continued to stare at Neville in hunger. He was learning something about his parents now... something new not coloured by the emotions of a mourning friend or loved one...

“Mr Greyson took some time each evening to tell me about my mom... I’ve been sneaking out once you and Ron went to bed and hung around here.” Neville explained without guilt.

“No matter how busy they were... Friday nights were always Lily and Alice nights. They had a Ritual they would perform each and every Friday.”

Neville reached into his black bag and pulled out two colourful thin square sheets. They were Vinyl record envelopes... one was burned from one end severely, and bent in a 40 degree angle while the other was perfectly fine...

Harry recognized them as the same Vinyl record... specifically the same album he had bought for Neville the day before.

“I found this in the ruins of our old home... it became derelict once they were attacked and I went to live with gran.” Neville motioned to the damaged record.

“Mr. Greyson said that this was their record. Every evening since third year they would try to make it in time to watch the sunset together on Fridays while playing this record.”

"They failed miserably each and every time..." Neville laughed. Harry couldn't help a sad chuckle as well, as he imagined for 4 years the two consistently missing the opportunity.

"But they always played the record anyway and just watched the night sky in blankets."

Neville opened the black polished box revealing a compacted vinyl record player.

"Its silly and all..." Neville stuttered a little embarrassed.

"No!" Harry said firmly affectively destroying any doubts Neville had about Harry understanding what he was doing. Neville paused and nodded resolutely.

"I found this picture in one of mums old albums... I never knew what it was about until I met Mr. Greyson... I'll make you a copy if you want." Neville handed Harry a slightly crinkled wizarding picture.

It was of the Gryffindor Common room. It was faded and tinted orange but clearly showed the two comfy chairs Harry had frequently sat in by the fire... moved over by the tall arched windows. One of the chairs had a 5 foot pretty witch with a round face excitedly motion towards Harry, motioning him to get over to her. She was clad in an overly large shirt and pyjama pants as she excitedly kneeled on the cushions of the sofa, bouncing up and down in excited glee. From the left of the picture, a bright eyed little girls face replaced the entire screen as she appeared to be adjusting the camera and then quickly ran and leapt onto her friend. The new girl with a shoulder length ponytail that bounced about as she and her friend fought for superiority and then smiled laughingly, simultaneously and suddenly, towards the camera a second before a bright flash occurred. And then the girls continued to fight joyously, ignoring the staring boys watching the pair from the real world.

Harry tore his eyes from the picture and asked Neville quietly but with a sense of desperation to make him a copy.

Neville nodded and motioned for Harry to pull up a lounge chair and handed him a blanket...

Harry was half tempted to refuse as this seemed like a private moment but kept his mouth shut as he accepted the blanket and watched as Neville pulled out the new record gently and placed it on the record player... he started the player spinning and with one last look at his mum... put the needle on a random spot, on the record.

Harry and Neville dosed off later in the night with Alice Longbottom sitting between her son and the picture of happier times. Listening to a story of waterloo sunsets with blank unfocused eyes.

Neither boy would ever know that Alice Longbottom had smoothed the hair out of her forgotten sons' eyes as he slept but Neville Longbottom would privately claim this one of the best nights sleep he would ever remember.

AN: Well their you go.... A little insight into the private life of Neville Longbottom. This chapter was never actually planned for my story but it seemed like a natural extension. I had mentioned in my outline Neville's behaviour as a little concept Idea to help me understand the character I was building but decided to write about it instead.

This chapter is a little small but seemed to wrap up some loose ends quite nicely. I hope because of the end this isn't considered a song fic. I just had it listed under my profile for the characters that the favourite song and band of Alice and Lilly was Waterloo sunset by the Kinks. Check YouTube for a video if you want to see an old music video of it.

Next chapter were back on track and Harrys finally heading to Hogwarts. Expect Harry to finally get some things explained to him and some interaction between him and the girls... I had planned Luna to make an appearance for this chapter but it just seemed forced.

Now the big question... what antics do you think the sorting hat will pull this year. Not really so big but its something.

Till later... Quazi

Chapter 7- The Great Gummy Rampage of 96

The next two weeks went by in a blur for Harry. A very slow and painful blur, that seemed to grow ever more torturous. Training had become a daily routine of waking up earlier and earlier, and doing different exercises that left Harry soarer than he had ever been. He had weekends off from his hellish schedule to do as he pleased, and spent most of it with his friends; catching up on their activities and taking their last few visits to the nice little beach town they had found earlier in the summer.

At first, the group seem polarized gender wise, but soon seemed to drift back into their old routine, with no mention of the awkward few days when the 'incident' had occurred. Surprisingly for Harry, Hermione never blew up as he had come to expect over her transfiguration grades. She had taken a different route all together.

Stopping every now and then she would randomly have Harry transfigure items she could not have possibly have needed, to test Harry's transfiguration abilities. She never called it a test, she always made excuses for needing a beetle turned button or a toothpick turned worm. After Harry would return from training she would query Harry on different aspects of transfiguration, claiming she needed help on her summer studies. They were all reasonable explanations but no one was fooled.

She was not-so-secretly evaluating Harry's aptitude for transfiguration, and his knowledge on its workings. Harry wasn't sure to what end... but didn't call her on her activities.

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It was Thursday, August 31st and Harry was given the day off from his normal schedule to pack his belongings. He was told his training would continue but at a slower pace during the school year. Harry was pleased to note that all the training while torturous, were noticeably improving his body and performance... he wasn't prepared to call himself ripped... or to say he had a six pack of a God... he was still a little on the short side, and a little thin; but he had noticed his

shoulders widening ever so slightly and some meagre but very welcome muscle developing. He was well on his way to perhaps duelling one of the nameless order members to a draw... he had never managed to beat, or even stay conscious throughout an entire day of training but he had managed to greatly improve his performance... to even earn himself a respectful nod from a few order members.

Even 'sir' refrained from giving him a derogatory compliment and managed a weak 'good work today' every now and then instead of his usual 'do better tomorrow.'

Harry and Ron were finishing packing their things... greatly expediated by Harry's freedom to Accio.

"Who knows we might actually be early for once" Ron said optimistically; dooming them to a late arrival.

Neville was in a frenzy searching for Trevor.

"Every year!" Neville cried as he ran from room to room searching for the toad. Harry had kept quite about Neville's night time wanderings and covered for him if someone ever noticed his absence.

"You think you should Accio Trevor for Neville?" Ron whispered.

"Remember the last time you tried to Accio an animal?" Harry raised his eyebrow in emphasis... willing Ron to remember the pain.

Ron winced at the memory of accioing Pig... Harry learned that day when Ron was scurrying away from his projectile owl... animals and summoners don't mix well together.

The door to their suite opened to let in a brow furrowed metamorph.

Harry watched the woman, as she bemusedly walked across the living room, and absentmindedly seating herself on the couch Neville had just violated searching for his pet.

As it became obvious that Tonks wouldn't reveal her source of confusion Harry decided to start the conversation.

“Tonks... what’s going on?”

Tonks, who was still looking back at the door she had entered through, looked towards Harry in question before replying.

“Your friends are weird...”

“How so?” Harry asked as he made his way to the door Tonks was continuously staring at. He wanted to know what was so interesting that it had phased the kooky auror.

“Well I just saw...” Tonks paused to watch as Harry opened the door to immediately reveal a hunched over Luna running back and forth between the walls carrying a small cardboard box with a handle, whispering....

“Bob....Bob.... Where are you boy?”

“...That!” Tonks finished.

Harry turned to the right... and saw the unflappable male presence he had become found of, standing guard outside his door. Luna zig zagged right into his minder and zig zagged away after checking Bobs pant legs... shaking them in case something were to fall out.

Harry turned back to Luna and watched as she continued her search pattern, calling for his other bodyguard. Every now and then, warning that if he did not show his presence, she would let Crookshanks get him.

Harry closed the door... and turned back to face his female watcher.

“What’s so weird bout that?”

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“How is it were always late...” Ron moaned. The group had woken the next morning waiting on the third floor of the view to catch a ride to platform 9 $\frac{3}{4}$. They had been informed at the Dinner Table the night before they would all be taking a portkey together.

They had not expected the other families housed in the Citadel to be there as well. The view was as crowded... if not more so than platform 9 $\frac{3}{4}$. There were a few injured individuals, who were hooked up to the magical equivalent to an I.V. hugging their children goodbye... they could not actually leave the tower due to their health... but were capable of seeing their children outside the confines of the hospital.

Harry recognized a few second years and forth years... but many of the children appeared to be first years. By the confusion and awed wonder some of the parents were showing... Harry understood that many of them were muggleborns.

Even though Dumbledore had assured Harry that Voldemort would most likely err on the side of caution... it appeared the order were playing it safe and taking in what appeared to be the entire muggleborn first year class for the summer. Harry momentarily wondered why he did not see the families before... but reminded himself that if he was not away from the citadel with his friends... he was in training most days.

It had been a confused melee of witches and wizards, who managed to pack themselves onto the portkey platforms and were tugged away to the train. Harry's group were one of the last to go thus resulting in the traditional Weasley stampede to the train minutes before it was to depart. The twins had taken an afternoon off to see their younger siblings away. They had adamantly refused return to Hogwarts to finish their seventh year. Mrs. Weasley was less than impressed and voiced her objections frequently. Dumbledore had taken the matriarchs side on the matter, and tried to convince the twins that it was in their best interests to finish their education. The twins had almost given in, but managed a weak but firm refusal. Dumbledore had relented but advised them to contact him at their earliest convenience to finish their studies through night courses. The twins

had agreed readily at their mothers' stern glare warning them to not refuse.

The group said their goodbyes to their parents and the matron weasley, going in search of a compartment. Surprisingly, there were quite a few. At first harry thought that some students had not returned but when they came accross the few compartments that were occupied, they realized why. It seemed like most of the students had taken to grouping up while riding the train. Not unheard of but odd to find so many doing so.

The train suddenly whistled before it started forward. at the initial lurch the group staggard and clung to the walls. Ginny managed to stumble awkwardly into harry forcing him to stabalize the girl... "Ohh ... thanks harry!" She fluttered her eyelashes at him flurtatiously as she clung to him.

Harry smiled weekly to the girl, while righting her and trying to get her to let go of his biceps, without making it noticeable. Harry caught Rons eyes and saw him wink approvingly at him.

Harry blushed, for no other reason than like most things in his life, the situation wasn't what it seemed to be.

They finally decided on a compartment around the middle of the train and filed in. just managing to fit the six. Harry pulled his trunk up and watched as Ron wordlessly helped load Ginny's and Hermione's trunks up top. Harry could hear the start of a argument as both girls immediately took offense to Rons gesture.

"I'm not an invalid Ron!" Ginny chastised.

"I just thought I'd help put the bags away for you...?" Ron asked bewildered as to why he was getting chewed out for his assitance.

"Do you think we can't handle the weight?" Hermione asked annoyed.

"What... no I was just..."

"You were what?" Hermione asked testily as Ginny again took on her mother's angry stance.

"...I was... I ... Forget it... Harry we've got to go to the prefects meeting..." He segwayed as he opened the compartment door and walked out. Hermione huffed and was about to follow through when the door was closed in her face.

"Thought you might want to hold the door open for yourself..." Ron remarked snideley as his voice disappeared down the hallway.

Hermione growled as she pulled open the door while affixing her pin to her blouse and stalking off to catch the boy.

Harry thought Ron was going to be in for an earful as he watched the amused face of Neville watch Hermione exit. Ginny looked on forlornly after her brother... Harry was confused for a second as to why until he remembered the day her letter finally arrived... she was not chosen as a prefect. She had claimed confidently that it was because she was more like the twins... laughing off the idea of her as a prefect, maintaining school rules... but Harry could tell she had wanted the little badge.

Luna on the other hand had been offered the position, but in a moment of solidarity towards Ginny... returned it with thanks claiming she did not want the responsibility during her O.W.L.'s. Harry thought that was a sweet gesture on her part but watched as Ginny reddened noticeably.

It appeared Red hair wasn't the only inherited trait the Weasley shared.

Harry had not actually seen or hung around Ginny very much since his birthday. There had been the odd crossing of paths, but with Harry's schedule, he had managed to avoid Ginny most days. Harry honestly preferred it this way, as she had been creeping him out. Unlike previous years where Ginny had been too embarrassed to approach her crush, this year she had taken a more proactive approach and become quite forceful. She seemed to think that Harry wanted his love interest to be aggressive and ultra confident in all

aspects of her life. While not a bad trait in theory... Ginny did not portray it in the spunky way he thought she had intended it. She seemed more angry and volatile, not to mention cocky.

The few rare instances she had been around Harry and they talked about the order or anything to do with the war... she would immediately try to get others to hear her perspective on how things had to be done. Every major or minor error that had happened she would analyse and explain as to how it should have obviously been handled.

Harry thought that Ginny had realized that everything seemed obvious in hindsight.

Harry missed the Ginny who stuck her elbow in the butter dish. This girl was annoying.

For this reason and many others... Harry was a little sorrier that Ginny didn't get her prefect's badge; as he was left alone with her, Luna, and Neville. Unfortunately Ginny had claimed the seat next to him and was leaving him little room. Backing Harry into a corner as she had Harry scoot over, she leaned into him as everyone became settled.

'this is some kind of sexual assault... unwanted touching!'

She smiled brightly at Harry as he looked down at her from his seat beside the window. He only managed a weak smile while pulling his coat a little tighter around himself.

"You guys wanna play cards... I brought a deck with me?" Neville asked. He had become quite taken with his recent Muggle purchase; often whiling away his time, consistently beating anyone willing to play him.

Harry wondered if he would ever be able to find a game other than quidditch he was unbeatable in. 'never played scrabble... who knows?'

Luna waved off playing in favour of ... stalling in her little cardboard box.

“Luna what’s in their?” Ginny questioned the girl as she watched her stick a finger in it, and smile.

“Hmm...” She asked dreamily as she continued to wiggle her fingers around inside the box.

Ginny turned to Harry and smiled amusedly while rolling her eyes, ignoring the weak smile Harry sent back. It was the only smile Harry knew to send her without frowning. She was about to ask her again when the Compartment door slammed open, and she found herself nudged to her left as Harry had already stood.

Harry who had been trying to take a peek himself at the mystery box felt a slight vibration and angry whisper near the entrance and on instinct pulled his wand, well before the door had opened. He felt no guilt in pushing Ginny away in his haste to defend himself.

There, between the wooden frames of their compartment door, stood Draco Malfoy. Behind him his standard bodyguards... and an assortment of other Slytherins lurked.

“Scar head...” The Malfoy scion said by way of greeting... his wand already extended loosely but readily at the black haired teen.

“Ponce...” Harry said by way of his own greeting.

Harry knew that his friends had already drawn their wands... he could hear them murmur behind him. He couldn’t hear their words but from the general tone of their whispers... he could tell they were anxious.

“Where’ve you been hiding Potter. You haven’t made the paper once this whole summer. Is your fan base dwindling already?” Malfoy sneered as he took in the situation. Harry recognized Nott from their year, and the familiar face of one other boy who looked to be a year older, standing outside the doors to their compartment. Crab and Goyle between them and Malfoy. Harry realized that as it was he was outnumbered. But that would only become a problem if they were to leave their compartment. As it was if they stayed inside the only way

they could attack would be to get through the door Malfoy was blocking. It was a bottle neck situation, and Harry was glad.

“Well don’t you worry your gelled little head one bit ferret, on where I’ve been... I’d be more concerned with where your Daddy is. I doubt Azkaban is very hygienic.” Harry goaded. He wanted to see how far Malfoy was willing to go in this fight with so many witnesses; that and he didn’t actually know how good Malfoy was in a fight.

Some might call Harry’s approach foolish, as he was taking on an unknown hostile variable. But Harry knew that for all Malfoy’s blood purism and support of Voldemort... He was still only a child playing a mans game... Harry who may have been a child in his own rights... was still vastly more experienced in its intricacies.

But one day Malfoy would not be the angry boy he was. He would become an angry man and Harry needed to take whatever opportunity he could get to study his reactions while he could.

Malfoy reddened at the insult... and Harry could see the other boys tense at Harry's blatant use of the prisons name.

‘Their all little junior death eaters... but who’s the other kid?’

“Bold words Potter... especially since you’re slightly outnumbered.” Malfoy reminded Harry, as he grit his teeth.

“What numbers got to do with it... and how come your not at the prefects meeting?” Harry asked cockily. The more confident he sounded the more aggravated Malfoy became.

Malfoy reddened at the question.

“Oh this is too good.” Harry was having a good day.

“Shut it Potter... its not like you’ve ever been chosen to be one.” Malfoy reminded him.

Harry was about to correct him on that, but wisely kept quiet on the subject. Instead he just grinned a charming grin.

“So as nice as this little chat was Malfoy... we’re a bit busy here... you wanna go slink away to wherever you usually slink to.” Harry said dismissively.

Not willing to be dismissed so easily. Malfoy glared at Harry angrily.

“You’ll pay for what you did to my farther...”

“Yes... and I’ll bet it’ll be painful, and all that other wonderful stuff...” Harry twirled his wand in a circle indicating he wanted Malfoy to move on...

What no one but Harry noticed was the slight refraction difference around the boys. As they were trapped in a stabilized bubble around their bodies, as Harry mentally shifted air away from them. Harry in essence had created a vacuum around the boys after he gave them a limited amount of air to breath. Surprisingly this feat was quite easy to master.

Harry had been taught the technique when in training... Even his instructor had commented on Harry's quick success at the spells involved. Harry was use the silent approach which while stealthy in this case... took much longer as he did not receive the additional control he gained by vocalizing the name of the charms he was using. It had taken him 2 weeks worth of practice to be able to confidently use most charms silently. Even that, his instrutors said was abnormal as in general... it should have taken him atleast another month to reach the level he was at.

Harry focused on splitting his attention between the situation and the spells he was using. It was difficult to start, but hARRY quickly picked up on the natural rhythm he needed and maintained his slow but steady manipulations.

Harry estimated that each boy had about a minutes worth of air left. No one commented on how Harry continued to twirl his wand in a lazy circle as he held the air about 5 feet away on either side of the teens.

"Why you... Stupe..." Malfoy was momentarily paused by the fact that a wand had appeared out of no where pointed at his groin. Harry followed the wand back up to the slightly less dreamy eyed girl with blonde hair and an infectious smile.

"Luna..." Ginny asked a little shocked by her friends choice of targets.

"hmm..." the girl asked dreamily as she held a firm stare towards malfoy.

"your wand...why there." Neville explained... a little paler as he sympathized with malfoy in this rare instant.

"Daddy taught me to fight this way... he says its the best area to attack when i'm in danger. he was very insistent I always aim there." the girl finished a tad confused at her farthers actions...

Harry almost bought the act but saw the glimmer of amusement hidden behind lunas eyes. She knew very well why her dad wanted her to aim low.

"Your dads very smart." Harry praised as he was hoping Malfoy would use up the last of his oxygen trying to attack, just so he could watch him get blasted in his giblets.

Luna beamed at the compliment and smiled indulgently before her eyes focused on each member of the Slytherin group. She paused to frown at each of them and take in their appearance.

"It's like looking at fish?" she commented as she observed the fidgeting Slytherins, as she scrutinized him.

"What are you on about, you crazed loon!" Malfoy sneered, agitated by Harry's friend; even more so as her wand lazily sparked near his groin at his remark.

Harry realizing that Luna had noticed the bubble decided to explain.

"She's talking about the fact that you have about half a minute left of breathable air before you start to pass out." Harry explained, while

indicating to the heavily breathing Crabbe and Goyle who were turning a little purple.

“You’re bluffing, you can’t do that.” Malfoy accused... he was slightly anxious as he continued to stare at the wonder twins out the corner of his eye. They seemed to be taking deeper breaths than normal and their color was not indicative of a healthy air supply.

Crabbe and Goyle looked at their leader in desperation before stumbling away to their left... moments later having to switch carts as they passed Harry's sphere of influence.

Malfoy who had realized that Harry wasn’t bluffing starred his nemesis on... trying to telepathically transmit his utter loathing. not willing to risk using up his air in a verbal sparring he would be forced to abandon.

“You know if you pass out... I’m not going to wake you... you can lie there for the rest of the trip...” Harry added helpfully.

Malfoy reddened noticeably, but stalked away imperiously if not angrily.

Nott watched Harry critically, he seemed to be sizing Harry up. He had not said anything during the little affair... but Harry could tell from the looks he was receiving... Nott was someone to watch. The Slytherin smiled charmingly and bowed imperceptibly towards Luna before making his way casually towards the already retreated Slytherins.

It was the other boy that gave Harry pause. He had not taken the same approach as Nott and masked his emotions as he stared Harry down.

He had openly displayed a level of loathing and hatred Harry had rarely seen in his life. The thing that intrigued Harry though was that he was not focusing his ire towards Harry... but Neville. Harry gripped his wand a little tighter as he watched the Slytherins' knuckles start to turn white as he clenched his fist around the base of his wand. He took one last look at Neville before dismissively striding away... in the opposite direction the other boys had headed.

Harry looked on in worry before turning questioningly towards Neville.

“Who was that?”

Neville who had been getting a little flustered with the attention...shrugged in ignorance.

Harry looked outside the hallway, having already dispersed his vacuum with a imperceptable wave, and checked for any more surprise visitors. He started to close the door to his compartment when the train suddenly lurched. Harry who had fallen backwards onto the floor managed to soften Luna's decent as she landed on him as well. They formed a slight X shape as they tried to regain their footing. Harry felt more than saw the fall of their things. Harry was glad he sent Hedwig to Hogwarts early as she would just add to the chaos in the compartment.

Harry looked down from his perspective to watch as Luna slowly looked up to meet Harry's line of sight.

“You're really comfy...” She said. Harry thought, he really liked her dreamy tone of voice.

“I could say the same about you...” Harry tried to play it smooth, but his voice was slightly higher in pitch than he thought was normal.

Neighter saw Ginny scowl at the girl as harry displayed a very different reaction to Luna in comparison to herself.

Luna smiled with a faint reddening of her cheeks before her face became grave...

“Oh no...” She moaned as she groped Harry for support as she crawled over him to somewhere past his head. Harry grunted in surprise as Luna's knee padded across his chest as she crawled over him.

“What?” Harry asked as he tried to get up with out toppling the girl.

"This isn't good... not good at all." She moaned, she quickly stood as if she had springs in her legs and pulled Harry up to his feet with surprising strength. Harry swatted at his forehead as he felt a fly buzz past.

"Luna?" He questioned...

"They're gone... we have to find them I haven't finished training them yet... Oh Bob ... Why..." She moaned as she scanned the floor twirling in a circle.

Harry confusedly swatted at his forehead again as he stared at the girl in clear bewilderment. He turned to find Neville looking at him in surprise and Ginny pointing at her left eyebrow.

Harry felt above his eyes and experienced a tingling sensation move up towards his hair. His skin felt slightly sticky as he managed to grab a squishy object. Harry momentarily still thinking he had managed to grab a bug... almost dropped it, as he had a thing about touching insects... not as phobic as Ron's reactions were to Spiders, but similar.

He refrained from flicking his hands away from him and looked towards the writhing green body he clutched in his fist.

There on his palm trying to make a daring escape... was a tiny, clear, green bear. It was one of the Gummy bears, the twins had charmed. Harry had not realized Luna had managed to save any from Crookshanks' hunts.

Harry paused to contemplate what Luna had said earlier...

"You named a gummy bear Bob?" Harry asked in surprise.

"Focus Harry... we can discuss names later..." Luna chastised as she spotted the bear Harry clung to. She cooed at it as she stuck out a finger and let it crawl its way over it towards her.

She proceeded to tickle the little bear with her finger and nudged it gently over in the direction of the cardboard box she had retrieved

from the floor. Harry watched amused as the bear looked towards Luna, and seemed to fall over and give the end of her index finger a mighty hug before walking into the cardboard prison.

Luna turned around and immediately dived towards the door. Harry managed to catch her before she slammed into the door head first.

“Let go... they’re... getting away!” she exclaimed in frustration. Harry set the girl down as he looked at the door in confusion...

Harry watched as he spotted a sugary red body disappear around a corner. Harry pulled the door open and spotted a stampede of colourful candies running away in all directions.

“Cool” Harry heard an excited scream from the compartment next door followed by the high-pitched screams of first year girls. An exclamation that one of them had gotten in someone’s hair... and the admonishments of one particularly strict sounding girl, scolding someone from trying to eat the little treats off the floor.

Harry felt the tug of his shirt as Luna dragged him out of the compartment...

“Quick... Catch em all... don’t let one escape.” She called as she pulled Harry into the compartment next door.

She quickly found a partially chewed one lying on the floor. She pulled the limping clear candy up and gave it a supportive smile as she put it in the box she carried with her. She scowled at a guilty looking first year before dragging Harry to the next compartment... and then the next... and the next.

“Luna why don’t I...” Harry raised his wand up as he prepared to call out a spell. He never saw the surprised paling look on Luna as he yelled... “Accio Gummy bears!”

An instant later dozens of screams emanated from all around the train as Luna looked at Harry accusingly.

Harry looked down at his wand and back up the corridor emanating screams and then to Luna in question...

"What just happened?" he questioned a little uncertainly.

"Oh now you've done it..." she vaguely warned.

"What?" Harry asked perplexed.

"Harry... the twins charmed those bears..." Luna explained. As she dragged Harry away from the hallway back towards their vacated compartment.

Harry was stopped from pondering what chaos the twins had unleashed this time when every compartment door opened simultaneously, Harry and Luna looked on the foreboding scene of the long corridor with what seemed to be endless open doors releasing shocked screams.

"Poo..." Luna deadpanned. As she watched hundreds of little colourful bodies who appeared to be slightly bigger than the average gummy bear gathered around the pair.

The little critters seemed to be split into the two factions... three quarters of them seemed to be cautiously approaching Luna with the same reverence the one Harry had pulled from his forehead had... the other quarter seemed to stare at Harry and Luna frigidly... walking along the carpeted floors menacingly.

"Now Bob... I was only kidding when I said I would let Crookshanks get you..."

Instead of pacifying the red gummy army, it seemed to galvanize them as they charged the pair. Luna grabbed Harry by his shirt once more as they sprinted away.

Harry did not want to leave as he watched the larger faction defend them.... They charged the angry red bears and attacked with sugary ferocity Harry would probably never see the likes of again.

Some of the bears used their sticky hands to their advantage as they climbed the walls over the defending group. Some managed to detach themselves but many seemed to permanently bind to the wall.

Luna Pulled Harry into an empty compartment and slammed the door. Harry locked it for good measure as he had just witnessed a hundred plus candies open every door in their train car.

“This is so Bobs fault... making them rebellious. I so will feed him and his clones to Crookshanks.” Luna threatened. Harry watched ominously as he could make out the outline of a dozen bears climbing the sandblasted glass on their doors... forming an ominous cute display of tiny bodies trying to get in.

Harry turned to look at Luna...

“What the hell?” he cried. He wasn’t sure whether he was more shocked or amused by the absurdity of the situation.

“Hey, you multiplied them Mr. I-got-a-big-fancy-wand-and-I’m-going-to-use-it” Luna admonished, as she plonked back down into her seat.

Harry gapped at her for a few seconds before the screams of students brought him back... they weren't pained wails of torture as much as they were the screams of over excited children being rampaged by sugary demons.

Harry decided he would be a little selfish and stay in the compartment, instead of living up to his hero reputation and rescuing them from sweet chaos.

'The hat said I'd do well in Slytherin...'

He looked toward Luna as she watched the rapidly reddening gummy tinted window to their compaetment.

“So... how much trouble you think we’ll be in?” Harry asked by way of conversation.

■ ■ ■ ■ ■

Hagrid had found the train station quite empty when he arrived; as the students had refused to exit their compartments for fear of becoming a casualty of the gummy wars.

News had spread quickly throughout the train some how about a sixth year Ravenclaw who had tried to duel his way out... the boy's friends were still trying to pry him off the wall where the melted carcasses of gummy bears clung him.

Hagrid had managed to tame the wild creatures with his talents with dangerous creatures, long enough to allow the students to leave. He was met by many an applause from the crowd. Ron and Hermione had met Harry at a carriage, along side a slightly sticky Neville, and Ginny, who was covered in multicoloured gelatinous goo. The prefects had tried to regain order once they had learned of the battle... but quickly made the situation worse as the bears either multiplied or exploded in sticky, sugary, chaos from each spell. Often times doing both.

They had wound up retreating back to their compartment where they had stopped along the way to lock students in their compartments to limit the amount of magic the student body could send at the little militia.

Once Harry and company had, made it to the school. They bore witness to an eager Peeves listening carefully to overexcited first years retelling the story of the havoc that ensued as they travelled from the paddock to the antechamber to be sorted. Peeves seemed enraptured by the tale. As he floated along with his head propped upon his hands as if he were lying on a carpet.

"What were you thinking Luna..." Hermione admonished. She seemed to be more irate as she was having a hard time picking out the treats from her hair.

She was a kaleidoscope of colors as was Ron and a few other prefects who had led the charge.

"It's not like Luna cast the charms..." Harry meekly defended the girl. Luna was getting a lot of glares from people around her as news had spread that it was her gummies that started the incident. Harry thought she was going to be in for a rough month as he had first hand experience with the Hogwarts collective shunning tactics.

"It's really just another prank by the twins... a really big one." Ron added. He seemed a bit more accepting of the incident and took it with better cheer than most. He openly chuckled at the hordes of children covered in gummy bear bits.

"That's not the point... the train is a mess... and what must the first years think." She added irately.

"A lot of them seemed to enjoy it..." Harry said remembering the many fascinated and curious boys. And the few girls who commented on how cute the little blighters were.

Hermione seemed to be working her self up for her next argument but was cut off by Albus Dumbledore clearing his throat loudly indicating the annual sortings, start.

Luna waved her goodbye as she continued to lug her slightly full cardboard box with her to Ravenclaw table... she received no shortage of glares and whispers from her house mates.

Everyone took their seats as Professor McGonagall entered with the first years. It was a much more excited bunch who had accompanied the strict professor this year. No doubt some had feasted on the armies of Bob, and were experiencing a mighty sugar buzz.

McGonagall took on a irritated countenance as she tried to suitably shut the children up to start the sorting... a difficult feat considering the amount of sugar they were exposed to.

"Hmm... hmm" mimicking professor Umbridge seemed to do the trick as the returning years shut up on instinct and the first years calmed due to the sudden silence.

Harry watched as Professor McGonagall turned her attention to the hat and nudged the chair slightly. She turned back to the crowd and awaited the song.

"..."

A few moments had passed and all that could be heard from the hat was silence. McGonagall poked the hat firmly trying to get its attention. She continued to poke until the hat twitched to life.

"Stop Poking me women... I felt it the first time!"

A few first years screamed in surprise to the talking hats... Words.

"Yes, well... if you could start" the professor demanded flustered with the unusual beginning of the year.

"Fine..." The hat cleared its throat and opened its mouth.

"I'm the sorting hat... welcome to Hogwarts... I'm supposed to sort you... try me on and I'll see where you belong."

The hall looked on in surprise at the shortest song they had ever heard... some weren't even sure if it had been sung or spoken.

McGonagall looked towards the hat in surprise but said nothing.

McGonagall glared once more for effect and unrolled her parchment. Clearing her voice once more she called out.

"Alipse, Patrick"

A child a little taller than doobby, walked across the floor and sat on the stool. Professor McGonagall raised the hat and placed it on the boys head... it seemed to mumble a little bit and Harry could see what little of the face that appeared on the boy seemed confused as he whispered back to the hat.

The boy took off the hat confusedly and handed it to professor McGonagall waiting for instructions.

“Mr. Alipse if you would place the hat back on... we must continue the sorting.”

The child mumbled something contritely. Professor McGonagall seemed to not even be able to hear it as she told him to repeat himself.

“It said it already sorted me... which table do I go to?” the child asked red-faced from the staring audience.

McGonagall huffed indignantly but took the hat firmly and stuffed her head in its nether regions where she had a hurried, whispered conversation.

“This day was not meant to be normal was it?” Ron asked rhetorically as everyone watched the increasingly irate professor.

“Professor Dumbledore... If you could...” McGonagall pulled the hat off her head as she irritably demanded the headmaster fix this.

Dumbledore smiled indulgently greatly amused by the situation... walked over to the hat and pulled it on to have a short but what seemed to be pleasant conversation.

“Very well...” the headmaster finished as he pulled the hat gently off his head, and placed it on the stool.

“Mr. Allipse, of all the traits of the houses you know about... which do you wish to represent.” The headmaster asked gently to the stuttering first year.

“Sir?” the child asked confused.

“If you were to choose one house, to call home for the rest of your Hogwarts experience which house would it be... it can be based on the principals the house represent... whether you believe you already exemplify... or perhaps will strive to exemplify in yourself... or based on the kind of peer group you wish to share dorms with. You are not forbidden from interacting with other houses... all this will decide is

your dorm situation and your head of house.” The headmaster explained.

“Umm... I like Hufflepuff... sir” the little child admitted. The indicated table cheered at the declaration.

“Then a hufflepuff you shall be... congratulations Mr. Alipse. Hufflepuff.” The headmaster nodded to both as the child ran off to his table.

“Headmaster?” McGonagall asked in clear confusion.

“It would appear...” the headmaster projected his voice so the entire hall could hear.

“... that the sorting hat is refusing to sort students openly... he will privately sort the student... with Hogwarts itself to register them as an occupant of the castle... but after that, the students will decide where they wish to stay.” The headmaster explained to the mass of students and teachers.

“This is because no one was listening to its warnings before...” Hermione said aloud. Explaining to Harry and Ron the situation.

Harry thought that was obvious... and by the slightly patronizing look Ron was sending Hermione Harry thought he had already figured as much.

‘I’m not that dense...’ Harry internally commented as he refocused on Professor McGonagall as she called the next name.

The students went by the new routine... professor McGonagall would call them up, they would try on the hat and have a little conversation, and then professor Dumbledore would ask them to decide on what house they wished to be sorted in.

Ron had commented on the ones that chose to be sorted in hufflepuff and slytherine... he joked about how they chose to be in the wrong house. Hermione huffed that he shouldn’t judge... but Harry knew that it was all a joke as even Ron for all his aggression towards the

Slytherin house, would never pick a fight with a 11 year old unless he was one... or if they started it.

Harry heard Colin excitedly whisper..." she's next... Denis look!"

Harry paled as McGonagall called the next name.

"Creevey, Pauline!"

"Not another one..." Harry moaned. As he watched a pigtailed little girl excitedly flounce up towards the hat.

Harry could have sworn the hat snorted as it left her head and twitched in Harry's direction but kept quite on the matter. The girl looked over in the direction the hat had twitched and instantly spotted Harry.

"Now Ms. Creevey... which house would you like to..."

"There... that one the girl excitedly called as she pointed directly at Harry."

Harry could hear McGonagall chastise the girl for interrupting the man and Dumbledore's chuckling while trying to get the girl to first consider all the houses... but she was resolute in her demands.

Harry let his head thunk beautifully on his empty dinner plate as Dumbledore announced the next creevey... A Gryffindor.

Ron only laughed heartily at his friends plight as the girl ran towards Harry but was pulled quickly into a group hug with her brothers as she struggled to meet the teen hero.

:~::~~::~~::~~::~~:::

The sorting had finally ended and Harry was resolutely looking anywhere but at his table as he did not want to see the deeply disturbing puppy dog eyes of a special little Gryffindor.

“Today has been quite eventful, more so than I can recall in many of the years I have served as headmaster.” The headmaster announced to the masses of hungry students.

“Now before we eat I must make a few announcements.” Harry heard Ron’s stomach growl in frustration at being denied food.

“After the impressive events of this summer. It has been decided by the international confederation of wizards in conjuncture with the non magical governments. That various Non magical representatives will be available in the school and other wizarding facilities.” A surprised murmur rose up from the student body at the declaration that muggles would be stationed at the school.

“Our guests here...” he pointed to the side wall where a group of 7 smiling figures in muggle business suits stood against. Harry could not remember seeing them upon entering the room and wondered if Dumbledore had hid them magically just for the theatrics.

“They will be available throughout the year and will be here to observe the workings of the wizarding world as our summit with their governing bodies continue. Unlike previous years high inquisitor they have guaranteed that they will not try to have any say in school matters. They are here to observe and help when available, that is all. Please treat them as guests.”

At the disgruntled tone of some students... Dumbledore added “They have also been given point privileges and the additional ability to reprimand students who would try to cause problems. Please do not force them to use this power.”

After the muttering had subsided slightly and everyone had taken a good gawk at the friendly bunch. Dumbledore cleared his throat to continue his speech.

“Some of you may have noticed that in your summer letters a booklist was not included for Defence against the Dark Arts... That is because I was not fortunate enough to find a defence instructor willing to teach you all through out the year.”

At the shocked and surprised whispers that ensued from this, the headmaster raised his hands to get the students attention.

“That is not to say that you will not be taught in the subject... throughout the year you will be subjected to many auror level instructors from both the Ministry of Magic, and The order of the phoenix. I will teach should the need arise as well. Can't be called a professor if I don't teach now can I” the headmaster joked brightly at the student body.

The students perked up immediately and resumed whispering for entirely different reasons than before at the prospect that they may be taught by Albus Dumbledore himself.

Even Harry was suitably impressed by the proclamation. He had undergone training by the order... but surely learning to defend yourself from the headmaster must have been something special.

“Yes... yes I'm sure you will all manage to do well in spite of me. Now the last announcement. Standard school rules are still in effect... sans the controversial educational decrees from the year before. You will be allowed to restart your clubs and study groups but you are still required to not venture in the forbidden forest lest we have to change its name. Sixth years please consult with your head of house during your appointed times, check your notice boards in your common rooms for the schedule. These appointments are to plan your course schedule. Now... lets us eat.”

The headmaster joyously waved his wand about making mounds of food appear on the long tables.

He beckoned the still standing muggle inspectors to join him and the rest of the faculty at the head table.

They graciously accepted and took seats interspersed with the teachers. Harry inspected the head table and realized...

‘Snape's missing?’

He was about to comment on the fact, when he noticed a white envelope placed on his plate.

He looked at the familiar loopy writing that spelled out his name, and opened it to reveal a note from Dumbledore asking him to meet him in his office, tomorrow at 3.

At Hermione's curious looks Harry decided to throw her a bone and offer up the irrelevant information. After appeasing Hermione's curiosity... Harry started to load his plate with some fried rice and chicken. He was about ready to dig in when a stream of laughter caught his attention, followed by a sensation of sad resignation.

He turned his head around and searched the room. Each table was interspersed with laughing students... but his eyes were drawn to the Ravenclaw table.

Luna was reaching for a bun but a boy across from her who was covered in a light red film of gummy entrails quickly grabbed up the bowl and passed it along the table away from the Ravenclaw witch. he seemed to pause and look at luna as she pulled her hand away slowly. Harry was sure as the child turned back to talk to his friends, he had denied luna the simple baked goods on purpose.

It was pointless, and childish, but it was still cruel and it incensed Harry like so few instances did.

"Excuse me he growled as he pulled his fork from the table and resolutely placed it on his plate as he grabbed two buns from a near by bowl. At the confused look of his friends he just filled his mug with iced water, and carried it and his plate away from the Gryffindor table.

He heard the surprised whispers from his fellow students at his actions but ignored it as he made his way past the hufflepuff table, short of the Slytherins, and walked down the narrow expanse between the curious ravenclaws, and jeering elder Slytherins.

He made his way over to the dreamy if not slightly more proturbant eyed Luna, who watched his approach.

“Hello Harry. What brings you here?” she asked casually. The boy across from her seemed to shrink under the glare Harry was sending him. Harry turned back to Luna, losing his glare and in a confident voice that didn’t betray his nervousness as he realized he was making a spectacle of himself for Hogwarts, asked. “ Just wanted to sit with a friend... do you mind if I...?” He pointed at a seat to her left.

Luna shook her head a little faster than usual and scooted over unnecessarily betraying her portrayed aloofness. Harry smiled disarmingly as he replied... “Thanks” and took a seat.

Placing his plate and mug down... he looked to Luna and raised his bun...” Want a roll... I grabbed two by accident?” Harry said unconvincingly.

Harry was a little afraid Luna would become indignant with Harry trying to defend her so obviously, but she only smiled thankfully, and a lot more happily as she stole one from his plate and thanked him.

They were soon joined by Neville, Ron, and Hermione... followed by Ginny. Many other students took the opportunity to switch tables to eat with brothers, sisters twins, friends or, significant others. No one mentioned Harry's little act of defiance against the norm... but a few people in the room showed their pleased expressions. The two heads of the respective houses involved smiled at the supportive gesture... the headmaster twinkled proudly and one or two other adults amusedly laughed at the students antics.

Through all this no one noticed as Luna quickly squeezed Harry's hand under the table in thanks as Hermione listed all the courses she was allowed to take.

Also, no one noticed as Peeves slinked away with the cardboard box of gummy bears... but that was beside the point.

AN: Here you go... I think I like this version of events better than what I had originally planned. Credit to Nonjon for the part where Luna says... “poo”

I typed it automatically as it seemed like such a Luna thing to say but I think nonjon said it first in one of his stories and just the way he said

it made it uniquely his. I never asked permission for it as its only a one line word but it seemed important I point it out as I think his Luna slightly inspired my luna.

Actually it might have been Rorshablot... not sure?

I was going for a more light-hearted chapter and to start the Luna Harry romance on its little journey... no they aren't going to start dating off the bat... you shippers will have to wait a while. But I think I made it quite clear that there is some affection there.

This chapter was littered with so many little hints to different aspects of my future chapters... its ridiculous. Until this story is completed you may never know how many little hints I added here. Some are blatantly obvious... while others you may have missed. Well at least I hope you missed them as I was going for subtlety. Crosses fingers

Hoping you all didn't mind the approach I took with the sorting hat... it seemed the most sensible one and the most realistic... plus I sure as hell didn't want my hat to sing... no more songs! I think others have had the hat not do anything... nothing comes to mind but I'm fairly sure its been done.

I'm a little concerened with my ginny as I do have plans for her but I just cant seem to write a chapter with her saying anything constructive to the plot... I'll try to work that in the next chapter... gotta get started soon. She does have a role in my little ansamble... and yes I plan to make DLP Proud.

Please send me your criticism as I really do appreciate it.

Next chapter... The Guide! And finally I get to introduce my real Hermione subplot... it'll be subtle but as the story goes it will help in character development.

Till next chapter

Quazi

Chapter 8 – Who’s afraid of the big bad wolf?

“Oh God...!”

“Will we never be rid of them?!”

Harry had awoken earlier that day to find his room mates chasing after their wands as they were being scurried away by a horde of Gummies.

The night before, Luna had hurriedly whispered to Harry that ‘their’ box was missing... but Harry had not actually been too worried as he had thought a fellow Ravenclaw had pre-emptively stole them, in an attempt to rid the school of the threat altogether... how wrong he was.

Through out the school, groans would resound as the little bears were discovered in the most obscene places trying to steal anything slightly magical. From bedrooms, to baths, the little critters were proving to be a new permanent feature of the castle as Hogwarts seemed to welcome them with open arms.

What Harry had wondered was, how they had multiplied once again as he was fairly sure everyone had learned their lesson the first time and would not dare shoot spells at the treats. ‘Yet here we are...’

Luckily the bears were not in the same numbers the the train had housed but enough that the student body enacted one of Moody's most cherished sayings, as they wandered down the halls.

No where was safe.

[illegible]

It was Sept.2nd and for once, a Saturday. This would be the first time that the school had opened on a weekend since he had been a student. He and Ron had made their way down the stairs to their common room... leaving Neville to re-unite with his toad who had apparently been in his school trunk. Harry thought that that was a bit convenient as the toad was always within reach of Neville...even if he

did not know it. But he didn't comment aloud for fear of sounding crazed.

"Is it just me or is that toad always around, I could have sworn he had lost it at the Citadel." Ron asked as he took his final steps down the stairs. He didn't seem to worry about sounding crazed.

Harry was about to tell him he was just thinking that... but instead used his vocal chords to let out an unmanly squeak at the figure that stood before him with an unholy smile.

"Hi-I'm-Pauline... Colin-told-me-all-about-you.... I'm-your-biggest-fan... can-I-have-your-autograph!" the little girl asked all in a rapidly increasing pitch and in one quick breath. At the end it had all turned into one high-pitched siren that left the girl exceedingly red-faced and at the verge of self-affixation.

Harry turned a stunned eye toward Ron who was looking on in surprise at the little girl as well.

Turning back towards the horrifying example of Creavey genetics... Harry opened his mouth to address the little girl.

"Um... Hi..." The little girl squeaked excitedly at that much with wide eyes.

"Ehh yaaa... I'm Harry... this is Ron..." Harry pointed to Ron who had waved a little hesitantly at the girl.

She didn't even notice as she rapidly nodded her head back and forth with each word her crush uttered.

Harry tried to translate what the little girl said but couldn't make it out..."What was it you asked?" he asked hesitantly.

"Can I Have Your autograph!" She all but yelled in the common room. Immediately out of nowhere she produced a pad of paper and a quill, which she shoved in Harry's personal space... forcing Harry and Ron to immediately lean back.

Harry gently pushed the pad back towards the girl as he looked around the common room to find more than a few Gryffindor's sporting amused looks as they watched their housemate deal with the first year.

"Umm... sorry... Pauline... I'm not allowed to give autographs." Harry lied warily to the little girl.

The little Gryffindor then did something so evil... Voldemort would shudder.

Her eyes widened and glistened with unshed tears as her lips trembled, and she slowly let her hands drop down to her side as she looked up to her hero.

"Really?" she asked pouting tragically. Her eyes shining as she looked up towards him.

Harry felt like he had just killed a puppy.

"I'm sorry... ahh... its really professor Snapes fault... he doesn't allow it!" Harry guiltily watched as her head lowered and trembled sending her ponytails bouncing hither and thither with each little shake.

"Are you ok?" Harry asked hesitantly...

"Its... fine... I understand" she said quietly as she refused to look up towards Harry.

Harry kneeled down and hesitantly placed his hands on her shoulders sending her into another set of upset trembles. He looked up towards the common room once more and saw the judgemental disapproving glares from the females. Their faces scowling as they watched him. The boys sending him their sympathy as they watched the duo... When Harry looked up pleadingly towards Ron for help... the traitor turned away in clear refusal to get further involved as he pretended to have never met his best friend.

"I suppose... I can make an exception this once..." Harry hesitantly offered the girl.

Her trembles stopped as she heard this.

“Really.” She asked meekly, as she continued to look down on the floor.

“Of course.” Harry said kindly.

“It’s Pauline with one l... “she immediately said moments after Harry had confirmed his signature... her eyes back to normal as she shoved the pad of paper under Harry's nose forcing him to lean back on instinct as he smelled the paper.

Harry wearily signed the paper and hightailed it out of the room. Ron following in his wake as he grabbed a vastly amused Hermione on his exit.

:~::~:

Harry received much teasing as a result of the newest Creavey but he challenged either of them to handle the situation any better. His challenge went unheard as Hermione pouted tragically at him as she imitated the evil little girls, eviler little face.

They made their way down to the breakfast table and started to pile their plates with food.

“So what are we going to take this year?” Ron asked in between mouthfuls of scrambled eggs... Large mouthfuls.

Hermione cringed at the site but ignored the familiar scene and answered the question.

“I’m going to see about taking the same courses as last year. What about you two?” she asked hesitantly. Referring to neither making the grade to take potions and thus become Aurors.

“I’m dropping history... and divinations... no use taking those. I’m not sure about herbology... but I think the rest will stay the same... except without snape!” Ron said with no lack of cheer. He had

managed to beat Harry in the subject percent wise but still short of Snapes standard. Harry was surprised but proud of his friend. He had done slightly worse on the practical aspect, but managed to retain more information in his head for the written. Even Mrs. Weasley was proud of the feat, as his grades. he had returned home each year had been vastly different than his O.W.L. scores. That and Harry didn't think even she believed Snape was a completely appropriate teacher.

"But if... if you don't take potions you can't become an Auror... what will you do then. Maybe professor McGonagall could talk to him on your behalf." She said this while looking between the boys.

"Not a chance for me to do that... even if she could convince Snape to let me in, I wouldn't be able to hear the end of me using my fame to get my way in his class. Besides, I'm not sure I want to be a Auror anymore." Harry said reasonably as he took a sip of his orange juice.

"You don't?" Hermione asked sceptically? Even Ron had quirked an eye at that.

"Well not really. I don't want to have to fight for the rest of my life and perhaps escaping with most of my limbs still attached. Plus working for the ministry would suck!" Harry said resolutely.

Ron had cringed at Harry's moody reference. "Ya there is that..." he said. Harry had the sudden mental image of Ron with a peg leg and electric blue eye as he cried Constant Vigilance. Both friends cringed at the same time.

"There must be other jobs out there besides being an Auror... I mean I hardly know enough about the wizarding world to commit myself to any one job right now." Harry explained reasonably.

Hermione seemed to nod and accept his reasoning as she took a bite out of her toast.

Harry looked up from his plate and turned to the great hall doors at a strange tingle of indecision that had flashed in his mind. He heard a faint mumble ... he caught the tale end of ... 'not wanted' before the sensation and whispers disappeared.

He immediately spotted a familiar Ravenclaw.

“Luna...” he called.

She turned her eyes to Harry and watched as he firmly waved her over and scooted over while patting a seat next to him. She smiled warmly at him as she glided across the floor toward the trio.

“Hello Harry. Ronald, Hermione...” she greeted as she sat next to Harry.

Hermione frowned at her friend but said nothing to unwelcome the Ravenclaw as she greeted her back

“I think I know what happened with the bears...” Harry said with a smile.

“Yes... I figured it out too.” Luna said sarcastically toward him with a smile.

Harry had not thought he would ever hear her say anything sarcastically as he had always thought the girl had only dreamy and excitedly dreamy as her only vocal range.

‘She must be getting more comfortable with us.’ Harry thought with a smile.

“What you figure out?” Neville asked as he sat himself beside Ron. Startling the red head as he took a swig of his pumpkin juice.

“The bears...” Harry said ominously. Neville seemed to shudder at the thought before he occupied himself with filling his plate.

“So what are you going to do with the weekend Neville. Class shouldn’t start till Monday.” Ron asked as he reached across the table for more bacon.

“My appointment with Professor McGonagall’s not till tomorrow so other than that, I figure I’ll head down to the green houses. Professor

Sprout promised to look after a couple of my plants I had transplanted from home.” He said excitedly.

“Right...” Ron said warily.

“Luna...?” Ron asked.

“yes Ronald.”

“What you got planned?” He asked, as he took a mighty bite out of his plate.

“I’m not sure... I suppose I’ll just wander the castle, maybe talk to him.” She said vaguely.

“Him?” Hermione asked.

“Hogwarts... who else.?” She asked.

“What do you mean talk to Hogwarts... the schools not alive Luna.” She said tiredly as she recognized another Luna statement.

“Well it’s not not alive. It’s not like you and me, but it defiantly is aware to an extent... don’t you feel it?” she asked confusedly.

“Feel what?” Ron asked intrigued.

“Hogwarts... its always changing... trying to get better.” She said affectionately as she looked around the hall.

It might have been Harry's imagination but the school seemed to brighten slightly at her proclamation.

“That’s rubbish... no where in Hogwarts a history does it say that the schools sentient.” Hermione Condemned.

“I don’t know about that Hermione... Dad used to tell us storys... a lot of people think Magical Buildings can be alive.” Ron said airily.

“Those are myths Ron...” She said exasperatedly.

"Anyway... you three shouldn't be using up your weekend lightly... I'm going to go study, The teachers will probably quiz us expecting us to have used our time wisely." Hermione reminded them firmly.

Harry thought that it was probably a possibility... especially with Snape, but he wasn't willing to give up his first school weekend so quickly.

"How about we meet up tonight and study... no need to cram like their will be an exam... we don't know what to study for yet anyway" Harry quickly reminded Hermione as she was about to correct him.

"Too true!" Ron agreed as he waved his fork about in emphasis.

"I haven't flown since the last quidditch match... I want to break out the old firebolt and go for a spin... you guys in?"

"Quidditch?" Ron asked excitedly.

"Probably not... we can think up something else to do but when was the last time any of us actually flew together.... Well without threstles." Harry corrected.

"I'm up for it. Neville" Ron queried.

He looked hesitant but at Harry and Rons pleading faces he gave in. Simultaneously they turned their heads to Luna. The girl raised a thin eyebrow at them but smiled her agreement.

"That leaves you Hermione..."Ron asked.

"Nu uh... I have studying to do ... and I hate to fly." The girl reminded him.

"Oh come on... the last time I remember you flying a broom was in the key chamber, first year." He whined.

"That was different..."

“But you were really good” Ron said flattering the girl.

‘Sneaky!’ Harry mentally complimented

The girl blushed but still tried to escape. “I don’t know about that... besides... I really should...”

“Come on Hermione... I was really impressed with your technique first year... and I’m sure you read a lot of stuff on how to fly since we were eleven. You’re probably a natural.” Harry further stroked her ego.

“Well there was this one book... but I don’t know?”

“It wouldn’t be the same without you...” Ron said charmingly as he rested a hand on her shoulder, causing the girl to blush gloriously... and Ron too, after realizing what he had done.

Harry couldn’t help but smile in amusement at his two friends. ‘And so it begins...’ he mentally congratulated Ron on starting them on the path to amusing Harry greatly this year.

“I suppose...” Hermione said with rosy cheeks as she kept her head down but with a firm smile on her face.

Ron coughed, trying to regain his manliness and masking his squeaky voice as he avoided everyone’s eyes... while saying ridiculous phrases like... “Good show.”

‘This years going to be fun...’ Harry cheered

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“Broom tag?” Ron asked.

“Definitely!” Harry readily agreed.

“What’s broom tag?” Neville warily asked.

“It’s a game me and Ron came up with last year during quidditch practice.” Harry explained

“Basically the same as regular tag but on brooms... and with some rules.” Ron said with a devilish glint in his eyes. They had just finished cajoling the last broom they needed from Madame hooch and were making their way to the lake instead of the quiditch pitch.

“What kind of rules...?” Hermione asked, wondering what she had gotten herself into.

“Nothing dangerous... actually there there to keep you safe...” Harry tried to comfort the girl.

“Definitely... had to think up some rules to keep us safe while playing.” Ron added quickly.

“How so...” Hermione asked warily.

“Well since were going to be chasing after each other we figure its highly likely someone might fall off their broom...” At the quickly paling faces of Neville and widening of Hermione’s mouth, Harry took over.

“Its why were by the lake... if we fall instead of hitting the ground... we hit the water... and we can swim up top, back to safety... after this summer I know we can all swim... so its no problem...”

“But we can still hurt ourselves seriously... what if we drown!” Hermione added in quickly.

“Well that’s true but that’s where the cushioning charms were all going to place on ourselves comes in and the fact that were all going to be casting bubble head charms on our heads before we head up their.” Harry added in reasonably.

“Seriously Hermione... we thought this through...” Ron added.

“But... this has to be against the rules... were prefects we can’t...” Hermione was desperately grasping at straws as she tried to find her way out of this pickle.

“Nope we checked last year... no rules say we cant fly our brooms anywhere other than the pitch and we are allowed a swim in the lake.... So were all fine rule wise.” Ron added proudly.

It had taken another fifteen minutes convincing but they had managed to get the other three in the air. Eventually after the first few rounds... the three new comers found themselves enjoying the game as much as the creators.

They were limited to flying within the area between the beach of the lake and the ends of the Hogwarts boundry... and they had to keep within a 5 meter gap vertically. The person who was ‘it’ would wield Harry's Firebolt as it was determined that Harry held to great an advantage flying it, while the rest flew the school brooms. They avoided the ‘it’ person with whatever aerial manoeuvres they could manage while the ‘it’ person could leave the restrictions of their playing field and come in from any direction as long as they went no higher than the castle height. Which, admittedly was still pretty damn high.

Harry watched as Hermione let out a shriek as Ron targeted her to be the next ‘it’.

“Make this easy on yourself granger... You cant out fly a Firebolt.” Ron smack talked.

“Try me carrot top” she screamed as she flew by. Harry had to admit she had improved since her first year... but it seemed to be more the fact that she had relaxed enough to enjoy flying... she wasn't performing any fancy manoeuvres but she did manage a decent speed and some sharp turns.

So far she had managed to avoid falling into the lake where as everyone else had managed it at least once. Falling in from such a high altitude with a cushioning and a bubble head charm in place, was actually the better part of the game as the air in the bubble forced you to shoot up rapidly in the water often catapulting you like a yoyo completely out of the water before succumbing to gravity and falling in again. the cushioning charm made it feel like dozens of

sheets were sling-shoting you about... it made for an awkward swim but manageable none the less.

Harry watched as Ron rapidly caught up with the girl.... The water slightly slowing him down as Harry had managed to actually perform a wronski feint on him over the lake... the result was a very wet red head who had shot out of the lake like a bullet from the buoyant forces and the impervious Firebolt that Harry had taken the time to cushion as well.

Weasley chased the flying encyclopaedia further into the corner of the playing field, she would soon have to make a sharp turn or be forced to be it by default.

He started to slow his approach as he didn't want to collide with her at the speed of a cheetah. Hermione predictably started her slow turn, and started to face Ron when he came to a slow stop in front of her; stuck between the boundary and himself.

"Give up..." he asked.

"Never..." she said firmly.

Ron could only smirk as he did something that Harry would remember for a very long time.

He slowly started to move forward as Hermione tried to move back and give himself some room... but Ron had already positioned himself. He raised his legs up quickly to stand on the end of the broom giving him a posture of an animal waiting to pounce...

And pounce he did.

He jumped high with the added velocity the broom had given him and landed on a shrieking Hermione as he topped her and the two fell head over heels into the water.

Harry could only laugh as every time They popped up he could hear Hermione shouting reprimands for Ron's foolish behaviour... which were quickly muffled as the two sunk back down into the water.

This repeated until they had managed a nice floating stop which predictably ensued in a splashing contest that Harry, Neville, and Luna quickly joined in.

Unfortunately no one thought to cast an impervious on their clothes so it was a very wet but happy group who had finally left the lake and Harry was forced to split from the group, to meet with professor Dumbledore... after quickly changing and casting drying charms on himself.

Harry paused outside the headmaster office as he observed the Gargoyle with annoyance.

The headmaster had simply said in his note that he could figure out the password.

Harry already knew what the password would be but tried to guess a few other magical candies before resigning himself to calling out.

“Gummy bears...”

Immediately the stone guardian moved aside allowing Harry access to the stair case as he traveled up its footings to the wooden door.

“Enter!” a kind voice asked from inside.

Harry resisted the urge to groan at the expected behaviour and opened the door to the headmaster’s office.

The room was the same as always with multiple silver tinkering instruments that did who knew what and a wall covered in paintings of headmasters of yore.

Admittedly wary looking headmasters, who had watched Harry with a sort of guarded stance.

Harry figured they hadn’t forgotten his little explosion at the end of last year.

What did catch his attention though was the rising figure of ...

“Remus!” Harry called excitedly as he caught the warm smile of his fathers friend.

Remus opened his arms and pulled Harry into a paternal hug as he greeted him.

“My... you’ve grown since last I saw you... How have you been Harry” Remus asked as he pulled him away and observed Harry from head to toe.

“I’ve been great... where have you been?” Harry asked. He had received a gift from the marauder; a set of leather gloves and black sunglasses that had confused him to no end, but had seen hide, nor hair of the man.

“Ahh... I’m sorry about that Harry, I was called away on order business but I’ve been recalled and Professor Dumbledore...” he nodded to the smiling man who watched the pair with a bright twinkle in his eye.

“... Informed me that he has some things you need to understand that a guardian might be better present for.”

“Am I in...Guardian?” Harry paused at the word and looked guardedly towards the headmaster and Remus.

“Yes Harry, Guardian... Let me start from the beginning.” The headmaster cleared his voice as he prepared for a little tale.

“You see, after that faithful Halloween night, we were still looking for a suitable home for you... in your parents wills it was mentioned that should Sirius be an unsuitable guardian for any reason, Remus was to be your second choice, if not them, a list of other names were given... unfortunately for one reason or another Remus here was the only name on the list left capable of the task. Unfortunately, due to former werewolf restrictions... Remus was denied the guardianship.” Dumbledore explained cautiously to the listening youth.

“I really tried to fight the ruling but the ministry was dead set against it... and well... they placed a general restraining order for any Dark creatures entering Surrey. It's one of the reasons I was never allowed to come see you as a child... I desperately wanted to... but never had the ability or the resources to until last year with the help of the order.”

Remus explained imploringly to the stoic faced youth; willing Harry to believe him.

“I know it's a bit late... and I don't know if you even need me... but since the Order is running the show I have been given an exemption and they're allowing me to be your guardian... I won't force it on you if you don't want me, but I'll be more than happy to...” What Remus was about to say was cut off by Harry quickly hugging him... tightly. No one said a thing as Harry fastened on to the belated dream come true.

The unknown relative who had come to take him away from the Dursley's...

Remus took that as a yes.

“I have a home... its in muggle London. The order is placing warding on it for now. It should be ready by Christmas... It's a bit small but you will have your own room and its close enough to the tube that you can get to Diagon alley within minutes... I'll stop by during the year and we can make plans...” the werewolf said happily... more so than he had been in a long time.

No one said anything for a long time till a red faced Harry had wearily released his grip on the man and tried to conceal his embarrassment by fidgeting in his seat.

Dumbledore, understanding Harry's plight, decided to divert the awkward silence away from him.

“There are a few other matters I would like to address with you Harry. One is a serious oversight on Hogwarts part. It is a wonder you had

been able to function in our society so long without the proper instruction.” Dumbledore praised him.

“Sir?” Harry asked gratefully accepting a new topic.

“Do you recall earlier this summer when we were talking about the Order’s origin and place in the magical world. I had mentioned a guide.” Dumbledore refreshed Harry’s memory.

Just as Harry was about to comment there was a knock at the door.

“Just in time... Come in” Dumbledore called.

The door opened to reveal the hunched over figure of Rubeus Hagrid as he squeezed through the door frame.

“You wanted to see me Professor? Harry?” The man quickly spotted his favourite student as he made his way inside.

“Hi Hagrid.” Harry greeted the man.

“Hello Hagrid. Yes... it is actually about Harry that we need to discuss.” Dumbledore said in explanation.

“Is everything alright professor?” Hagrid asked while taking glances between the two and looking towards Remus every now and then.

“It is nothing that can not be fixed. An oversight has been made; I am afraid I did not check when you first picked up Harry, to make sure all the proper arrangements had been made.” The man explained. He waved his wand creating a much larger chintz chair for the large man; causing Harry to be trapped between Hagrid and Remus.

“Oh?”

“Yes... Hagrid... in all the commotion of that day... did you perhaps forget to present Harry with his guide?” Dumbledore gently asked. He seemed to try and keep it as friendly a question as possible as he did not want to upset the man.

Hagrid looked at Dumbledore in confusion for a moment before his face seemed to pale.

Hagrid said a number of hushed colourful words before starting on a minute long apology as he babbled about how sorry he was to both Harry and Dumbledore.

Harry could only pat Hagrid's hand in comfort while saying that it was okay.

"...It's just that I got so angry with them Dursleys... and I meant to, I remember checking my pockets before entering the door and I felt the book in one of them... I still have it... I'll go get it." The man tried to get up and make a run for his cabin, perhaps ramming through the walls in the process but Dumbledore silenced him and beckoned him to stay seated with a firm... "Hagrid!"

"It is all right... I do not believe Harry will hold a grudge on the matter and I happen to have an updated Guide I have prepared just for this meeting with me." Dumbledore explained.

"Really?" the giant of a man asked with beetle eyes glinting towards Harry in desperate confirmation.

"It's okay Hagrid... it's no big deal... I'm getting a better guide than the one I would have gotten... sounds like a plus." Harry said smiling at the man.

"Indeed." Dumbledore said with no small amount of amusement as Hagrid enthusiastically thanked Harry.

"Now Harry, as the name suggests... The Guide is a guide to the magical world we give to muggleborns or wizarding children who do not live within wizarding populations, or all wizarding families. This guide interactively fills in the gaps of knowledge on what the child needs to know for his or her given situation on magical life, in and around London."

"Interactively?" Harry asked perplexed.

“Rather than explain, how about I show you.” Dumbledore reached into his desk and pulled out a black leather bound book with gold embossed lettering naming it... The Guide.

Harry took the book in his hands and after looking towards the adults in the room for confirmation opened it to reveal...

“Its empty?” Harry said perplexed.

The first paged was a clear plastic like sheet of paper that divided the cover from the hundreds of blank yellowing pages.

“Please place your hand on the clear paper of the first page Harry.” Dumbledore instructed. Harry did so if not warily and waited. He didn’t feel or see any difference and looked up at the headmaster for further instructions.

The man smiled while peering down at the book and said. “You may now read Harry...”

Harry looked back down only to find the page he had his hand on earlier to be completely black and clouded over, except for a few words written in the same clear transparency the paper had been moments before

Welcome to the magical World Harry Potter.

Harry flipped the page and found a table of contents listing different aspects of wizarding culture from holidays to currency. He flipped to a random page and found a description of the wizarding legal system.

“I would suggest you read that at your leisure to get caught up with the rest of your classmates.” Dumbledore suggested. Harry nodded emphatically.

“Hagrid If I could trouble you... could you inform professor McGonagall that we are ready for her.”

“Of course professor. Harry, I'm really sorry. I'll see you in class... I will see you in class won't I?” the man asked worriedly.

“Already got my text book Professor” Harry said with a smile.

Hagrid could only blush as he still hadn't gotten used to be called a professor. He patted Harry on the shoulders rocking his chair back as he left the office.

“I hope you don't mind Harry but I had asked Minerva to schedule your appointment for your class schedule after our meeting. I would like to work in some time for your other activities throughout the year. Thus, would like to be present for your appointment... do you have any objections.”

Harry shook his head saying that it was fine.

“Sir... why are we having these appointments... I don't remember any of the other sixth years having them.” Harry asked the man.

“Actually Harry... they did. It was during the summer the previous years after they had received their results, but this summer has been a little more hectic than normal so we decided to use this fortunate weekend of ours to compensate.” The headmaster explained.

“Oh... well that makes sense... but why an appointment at all... I don't remember having one for when we were deciding our third year courses.”

“An excellent point Harry, But you see these appointments are not just for course schedules... they are also here to help guide you on all aspects of your final two years at Hogwarts.” The man explained.

The rest of the time spent in the office passed by slowly as Remus took the time to demand Harry explain how his training was going and in general fuss over him as much as Mrs. Weasley ever did.

It was a good 15 minutes until the head of Gryffindor, and surprisingly Slytherin made their way through the door.

“Hello Mr. Potter, Remus.” Professor McGonagall greeted them as she carried with her a slightly thick file she quickly placed on the desk.

Snape grumbly ignored the occupants of the room only greeting the headmaster as he took a seat as far away from his student as possible.

“Professor” Harry said in greeting nodding toward his head of house but resolutely ignoring his previous potions instructor.

“Now shall we get right to it then...? I have reviewed your scores for your O.W.L.’s and I am most pleased with your results... although normally I would frown upon any of my students receiving a troll. No one will fault you for that with Sybil...”

“Minerva” Professor Dumbledore said in warning...

“Yes well... as I was saying... I believe last year I promised you my assistance with helping you become an Auror. I have brought Professor Snape here to negotiate your acceptance into his class.” Professor McGonagall announced warily.

Harry fidgeted under his head of houses reminder of her pledge to help him in his endeavours.

“Actually professor... I’ve done a lot of thinking since I got my results.... And I’ve decided that becoming an Auror is not a career I want.” Harry said warily as he slowly made eye contact with his head of house.

He did not see the scolding glare he had expected to see but the soft accepting smile he had witnessed only once before during his second year.

“By all means Mr. Potter, it is your life... do you have a career goal in mind that you would like to focus on though?”

“That’s the thing professor... I don’t know of any wizarding professions other than Auror, Ministry worker and teacher. And opening up your own business but other than those I don’t know enough to make a decision...” Harry said a little embarrassed, especially admitting it in front of his most hated professor who was coldly observing Harry.

"What is this nonsense...? Don't waste our time Potter! You are expected to have done enough research in preparation for these meetings." The Slytherin head scolded frigidly.

"That is not true and you know it Serverus... you yourself had been indecisive no less than three times during your own appointments." Professor McGonagall sternly reminded the man.

"Also Mr. Potter has just been given his Guide as of 20 minutes ago... and has yet to review it..." Dumbledore piped up, staring pointedly at a Snape.

"Just been given... don't tell me Hagrid forgot! I remember reminding the man when I handed him the copy." McGonagall flustered as she took in the information.

"The matter has been resolved... but because of the situation Harry is lacking in the knowledge of suitable careers he might want to pursue."

"Yes ... of course... Tell me Harry what would you like to be... or do for that matter, describe your ideal career and we will see if there is a career to match it in the wizarding world." The woman gently prodded.

Harry stopped to think... 'What do I want to be...?' He honestly had never really considered it. He thought of all the muggle jobs he could remember admiring.

"Umm well, when I was young I always wanted to be a pilot...but I don't want to spend the rest of my life flying a broom. I always thought bill Weasley's Job was great... a curse breaker. But I don't really know much about it... and the goblins are kind of rude."

"I know for sure I don't want to work for the ministry as they are; too much politics... and I'd probably be used right away as a spokesman for them. Could you tell me what options I have available to me so far with the courses I've taken?" Harry asked desperately in an attempt to stop talking.

McGonagall furrowed her brow in thought and reached into her folder for a white sheet of paper.

“Well I can’t fault your reasoning, but to avoid working for the ministry does limit your choices... From your grades and courses you have taken... you can easily apply to become, a beast specialist, an example would be the Weasley’s second eldest son, Dragon tamer I believe, you could also become a healer should you continue your potions studies...” professor Snape scornfully snorted at that, causing the other three adults to glare at him in warning.

“... we have certainly allowed exemptions to continue in the course before and I see no reason why that cannot be the same here. Also if you are willing to independently study Runes in addition to potions, you will be eligible to become a ward crafter. With the same constrictions plus one more year of apprenticeship under any chosen field of magic. You may apply to be trained as a magical researcher.”

“Magical Researcher?” Harry asked intrigued.

“You have met many during your time at the order headquarters... they mainly study magic and its interactions with our world. They are also in charge of spell development and are the ones responsible for designing almost all the spells you have used since you started Hogwarts.” Dumbledore explained to the youth.

Harry suitably impressed could only look on in thought as he considered the career.

“It sounds impressive... but how come arithmancy isn’t part of any of the requirements?” Harry asked puzzled. He thought it would at least be a requirement for research position.

McGonagall frowned imperceptibly but answered anyway. “It is a difficult course, but it has no real world applications unless you are looking to make statistical projections. It is another form of divinations in essence. A much more precise form, but just as vague. Most of the careers I have listed do not require it as a prerequisite skill; as to apply its concepts to any of them could result in dangerous circumstances.”

Harry only nodded a little surprised. He had to admit he had assumed the course dealt with math and all its intricacies when applied to magic. He had assumed he was severely limiting himself when he did not take the course. To say he was relieved was an understatement. But he did find it ironic that Hermione had given up one form of divinations just to take another.

“Well professor... I’m leaning towards the magical researcher position or ward crafting, but, do I have to decide now, or can I still have the option to choose a different subjects later on.” Harry asked. He thought it was slightly unfair that he had already set his course load in third year without having any understanding as to how it would affect his career choices in the future. It made him blush slightly, at his and Ron’s reasons for choosing the courses they had.

“It is getting a bit late to do so...but if you are willing to work at it... There are independent night courses run by the ministry that you may choose to take to further your options once you are out of Hogwarts. May I suggest that you continue taking Charms, Transfiguration, and Defence, as your core subjects Care of magical creatures and potions as extracurriculars, and you use the free time from your smaller schedule to study Runes independently.” McGonagale said while using a quill to check off subjects on a page.

“I think not Professor, I will not allow this glory hound to waste valuable time in my class roster. Let him become a bar tender at a run down pub in knockturn alley.” Snape said acidly.

“Serverus, that is enough!” Dumbledore said sharply. Snape and Harry could both tell that Dumbledore was beyond agitated... the angry frown he wore was one step bellow frightening.

An Awkward silence followed where Harry thought Snape was deciding on the best way to save face.

“My apologies headmaster...” Snape said formally. He seemed to be apologizing to Dumbledore instead of Harry. Harry didn’t think he would ever consider apologizing to a Potter and he didn’t really care, but just watching Dumbledore scold him was worth the insult.

Professor McGonagall turned an irate eye toward her colleague but said nothing to further escalate the tensions as she shuffled her papers.

“So are we agreed that Harry shall take potions with the sixth years... McGonagall said with finality.”

Harry was about to object... but Snape did it for him.

“I do not remember agreeing to such.” He said aristocratically as he observed a tiny cylindrical object on the shelf that emitted black smoke.

“And why not.” McGonagall asked testily. Harry could see she was holding back a scream of frustration from the man.

“Simply put, Mr. Potter has not achieved a grade I deem worthy of being taught in a sixth year level potions class. The potions we will be creating are far too temperamental for a novice without the talent to safely attempt.”

“If I recall... Some of the students in your Slytherin class... achieved far lower grades than Mr. Potter, but are being allowed to continue. And If I am not mistaken Many of their grades previous, did not reflect the mark they achieved under the more than fair exam conditions of an O.W.L. Procter.” McGonagall said smugly.

“Are you insinuating something Professor...” Snape asked dangerously.

“Just stating a fact... Professor.” McGonagall said as dangerously.

Harry took the frigid glaring contest between the two role models for the student body as his best chance to state his wishes.

“Professors If I may.” At the abrupt hand gesture Professor McGonagall gave him he took his opportunity.

"It is clear that me and Snape..." At the warning nod from Dumbledore Harry conceded... "Professor Snape... Will have a difficult time dealing with one another if I was his student."

When no one said anything Harry continued on.

"Maybe it would be best if I were to study potions independently as well." When no one said anything he decided to go on as all eyes were on him. Even if Snapes were less than friendly.

"I've already bought a Potions text this summer with this in mind, if I were to borrow class notes and perhaps have an outline of what the sixth years were to be taught, I think I could handle..."

"Such arrogance, do you think you can do better without an instructor's guidance. Simply by following notes and outlines. There are reasons you have teachers." Snape said sardonically, but something in his voice seemed off, Harry almost thought he sounded worried.

"Well Professor, maybe you could explain to me what you would add to the scenario..." Harry challenged. It was borderline rude but Harry had a point he wanted to make.

"What would I add? I have years of experience that accredit me a master of the art. You barely managed to scrape by a worthy cleansing draft." Snape snorted amusedly at the absurdity of it all.

"Well all I have planned is to use the instructions in the book I have purchased with your no doubt useful class notes to prepare my potions... In class so far we have taken notes and been given a recipe to follow... I don't see how the scenario will be any different." Harry said theatrically perplexed. He wanted to point out on how useless Snape really was for the subject. If he was a good teacher... he sure as hell wasn't one when Harry was in class.

"Are you questioning my teaching methods Potter?" Snape said icily as he leaned into face the brat.

Harry was proud that he did not as much as budge as the man leaned in to intimidate him.

"No...Sir" Harry said with as much respect as he could muster for the man. Which was nil.

"Gentleman..." Dumbledore said sternly as he looked over the two.

"Sir" the duo said in sync as they turned to face the man.

Dumbledore directed a furrowed brow at the two... but sighed in consternation at their equally hot headed attitudes.

"Harry, I believe your suggestion may have merit. At the end of the year I will have an Impartial Newt examiner come in to test your skills." He directed a stern glare at his head of Slytherin, but said nothing.

"Mr. Potter, I'm afraid I must point out, that should you attempt this, I can not allow you to continue on the quidditch team as you will be attempting to catch up with your fellow students in two subjects without a instructors guidance." McGonagall said regretfully. She seemed more upset with having to say this with her competing head in the same room, than with the actual scenario.

Harry stopped to pause... He did love quidditch, and it was one of the few things he had been looking forward to this entire year. But it did eat up a lot of his time. Harry was prepared to argue the matter but knew there was only one responsible thing for him to do... at the smug look Snape was wearing, he knew he would regret what he was about to say.

"I suppose I must give it up then... I'm sure the new captain would be more than capable of finding a good replacement. Besides I hardly played last year and we still won... I'm sure Gryffindor will do fine." Harry said this more for his head than himself, as she looked particularly crest fallen.

"I understand Harry. It is the most responsible choice considering.... But I am allowing you to participate as a reserve seeker should the

Gryffindors seeker be incapacitated during a game.” McGonagale said with more cheer at the possibility that Harry might still be able to play.

“Thank you professor.” Harry said graciously.

Harry was a little confused as he had expected Snape to be giddy with depriving Harry the chance at quidditch... but he was grumpily avoiding eye contact with all members of the room.

“Well then the matter has been settled. Mr Potter, you will be taking Transfiguration, Defence, Care of Magical Creatures, Charms, and in your free time you will study Potions and Runes. I will have the course outlines and class notes delivered to you...” McGonagale said primly as she scribbled some notes in her paper.”

Harry tried to get a look at what she was writing but the folder was closed quickly.

“Expect your formal schedule Monday during breakfast.” She said as she gathered a few documents she had scattered on Dumbledore’s desk.

“Thank you professor.” Harry got up awkwardly as his head of house did.

“On a side note... I had the opportunity to review your written exam... I am very pleased with your performance. You came in second of your year; for my class.” The woman said warmly as she spared a rare smile to her student.

Harry blushed at the praise and thanked her once more as she, and a sick looking Snape exited the office.

“You got second of your year in transfiguration... well done. What were your grades?” Remus asked excitedly. Harry, startled at Remus's sudden input, could only blush further under the praise and secretly for forgetting his presence.

"I did okay... It was nothing special." Harry tried to downplay the score

"I do happen to have the results with me if you would care to have a look." Dumbledore said happily as out of no where his exam results were presented to his new guardian...

Dumbledore ignored the aggravated looks Harry was sending him in favour of observing his new guardian.

Remus readily grabbed the folded parchment and quickly looked at it.

Harry watched as Remus scrutinized every detail of the paper. Harry fidgeted under the silence as he waited for Remus's verdict.

He slowly raised his head above the folds of the paper to look at his new charge.

"You got better than perfect on a defence exam..." Remus deadpanned as he looked at Harry in proud astonishment.

Harry stuttered that he got lucky but couldn't avoid the ruffling of his hair as Remus took his time praising him for each and every mark.

"Oh this does remind me Harry, we should schedule you to take your history exam again." Dumbledore said in embarrassed shock at his own forgetfulness.

"I don't really intend to take history sir..." Harry said in respectful dismissal.

"Even so... it would be better for you in the long run and much easier on my paperwork if you would retake the exam, if nothing else it could raise your already impressive 7 O.W.L. Score to 8 and that does reflect well on a resume." Dumbledore coaxed.

Harry conceded agreeing that he had nothing to loose and was informed that the retaking would take place before the winter holidays.

“Now Harry I did bring you here for one other purpose... we are almost done I do promise.”

Harry waited patiently for the headmaster to continue... he was getting a little hungry as he had skipped lunch.

“You might have noticed yesterday that Professor Snape was absent yesterday during the feast.” Dumbledore asked. At Harry's Nod that he had indeed noticed he continued.

“He was debriefing the order on his summer long reconnaissance with Voldemort.” At Harry's surprised but eager face Dumbledore quickly said.

“I can not tell you all the information that he had gleamed, but some information that he did gain was who Voldemort planned to target next.

“New targets...” Harry asked warily already knowing the answer.

“Yes... I'm afraid that in addition to a few notable names... you have been targeted specifically to be killed on site.” Dumbledore said sadly

Harry relieved at the information only released a breath he had been holding in and sighed.

“Oh I was worried that my friends had been targeted... This isn't very new sir” Harry said with a smile.

“Well it is in the sense that all death eaters were given orders previously to capture you and bring you to Voldemort directly. He at the time wanted to make you an example and clear any doubts anyone had about his being defeated by a child. But now he does not appear to want to take the chance that you would embarrass him once more.”

Harry had paused to frown at that but wasn't to upset over the information... Remus on the other hand was twitching ever now and then as he put his arm around Harry's shoulder. He would squeeze a

bit harder than Harry had thought a normal human could and Harry swore his shoulder would pop out of his socket from the strain.

"I'm sorry to say that until further notice I can not willingly let you leave the school unless you are escorted by bodyguards or by at least two teachers. This means until further notice Hogsmead visits are out of the question." Dumbledore said sadly.

Harry for a moment wanted to complain but could respect the decision as at least he was informed why instead of being misled like in third year.

"I must ask you not to try and sneak out either... I am trusting you in this matter to not." Dumbledore said sternly. Harry quickly assured him that he would comply.

"Now it is getting late and I have taken up much of your time. Enjoy the rest of your weekend and should you ever need to see me please do not hesitate." Dumbledore said by way of a friendly dismissal.

Harry and Remus quickly left discussing their respective summers as they made their way down to the kitchens.

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"Harry where were you mate?" Ron asked as he spotted his friend entering the Gryffindor common room.

Harry spotted Ron sitting on the love seat by the wall opposite Neville in a game of wizarding chess. With Ginny sitting next to him engrossed in a book she seemed to be forced to read. Harry could tell she was forced to read it by the stern look Hermione graced as she seemed to be tutoring Ginny in a subject. Also she seemed less than willing as she lazily turned a page in her book while zoning out in boredom.

"Oh I was talking with Remus in the kitchens... I guess time sort of flew by." Harry said as he sat beside Neville to observe the game.

“Remus was here... how come?” Hermione immediately questioned... relieving Ginny temporarily of her forced studies.

“Dumbledore brought him over for the meeting. He managed to become my new guardian so he thought it would be good if he was there to explain things.”

“Is that all he asked you there for...?” Hermione questioned.

“Well no... I also had my appointment with McGonagale there.” Harry said vaguely. He didn’t want to mention his news on Voldemort as he was fairly sure Hermione and Ginny would start to rant.

“What you taking mate.” Ron asked eagerly. Neville and Hermione both turned their heads to stare at Harry in question as well.

“Well I’m going to be taking Transfig, Charms, DA, and Hagrids class.” Harry explained.

“Is that it... what about potions... or herbology... or astronomy...” Hermione asked scandalized.

“Well I need the free time to catch up in runes and study potions on the side.” Harry said reasonably.

“You’re doing runes... That’s great... I’ll get you my notes. What about arithmancy... it’s a fascinating subject.” Hermione gushed as she tried to persuade her friend to take more courses.

“I don’t really need it for what I’m planning to be.” Harry said.

“What’s that?” Ron asked.

“Well McGonagale told me if I work at it... I could probably become a Magical researcher or a ward crafter... those sound much better than becoming an Auror.” Harry said a little excited himself.

“A Magical Researcher...” Hermione asked a little hesitantly... Harry got the idea that she had not thought him the researcher type.

“What?” Harry challenged.

“Well are you sure you don’t want to become a Auror, your already training with the order, and no one would deny you that, you just don’t seem the type to research.”

Harry thought about arguing with her for her lack of faith but decided to ignore the matter.

“Well those are the things that interest me the most, but who knows... I might not want to work in the wizarding world at all. I might want to go find a job in the muggle world later on.” Harry said reasonably... he had indeed considered the possibility as he was much more comfortable in the muggle world than he was in the magical one.

“You’re leaving the magical world...” Ron asked in shock. Hermione to was not expecting that, as she stared in surprise at her friend... Ginny looked if at all the most dumbstruck. Neville seemed to be taking it the best as he looked at Harry with a raised eyebrow but accepted the statement.

“But Harry you don’t have any schooling in the muggle world. We can’t just go back. We quite their schools when we were 11 how are you going to hold down a job.” Hermione asked in worry.

“Well I can’t be the first one to have wanted to return to the muggle world after finishing Hogwarts. I’m sure there’s a way... and my parents left me enough money so I can definitely live on my own while I’m getting whatever prerequisites I’ll need.” Harry tried to comfort his shocked friends.

“Besides I’m not dead yet... but its another option I have for after Hogwarts.” Harry reminded.

Needless to say Harry did not hear the end of the conversation until late into the night... when he could finally escape to his warm bed.

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AN: Huh... this is my longest chapter yet... but one of my most boring in my opinion. Anyway I'll see about getting another chapter out before the new year... I kinda rushed this chapter out for Christmas.

That's right... no more quidditch... well at least... not much of it... Harry will get his chance but it won't be a major thing to look forward to this year. I'm not much of a fan of the sport as I find the games a bit boring, I didn't want Harry to start to find the game boring himself as in the books its clearly shown that he is just as obsessed with the game as Ron... but I figure if he is given a choice between getting a good job and going toe to toe in the Gryffindor Slytherin annual quidditch match... he'll choose getting a good job.

I'm compromising on Luna's character a bit... she is still the same dreamy girl as cannon described her as but she is slightly more guarded than people realize... she is starting to become comfortable enough with Harry to drop that guard and interact with him on a more natural level. Normal Luna I cant see as making a teasing sarcastic remark... my Luna I figure will if she knows the person. Its all under the principal that if your more comfortable with a person, your more willing to expose your own personality to them... not just the face everyone else normally sees. I don't think I explained that well... but hopefully the majority of you guys will get that.

You might notice that not everyone in Harry's circle of friends are exactly keen on inviting Luna in.

How did you guys like my Pauline... I figure as the only Creavey female inexistence... she has a couple tools she can use on Harry that her brothers simply can't master.

For all those Ron Hermione shippers out their... I wouldn't get to excited... I have plans for their relationship but its not going to end the way you guys would like. I have some plans in place for them. I'm deviating from cannon at a slow pace...

Next chapter expect classes some new spells, and the return of a previous character.

Also some other things I'll keep secret for now

And yes I have a reason for bringing back the gummy bears. Plus I kinda like them.

Merry Christmas

Quazi

Chapter 9- I miss fifth year...

Harry was using his last day before classes to read through his new guide. When Dumbledore said it was interactive, he really meant interactive. It startled him when he voiced a question aloud while reading and text appeared on the bottom of the page.

Apparently as long as he was holding the book and asked a question... the book would respond and provide an answer. It did not always have the answers but it usually gave references as to where to look for an answer.

Harry turned the book back to its index and skimmed it, looking for any thing to peek his interests. There was so much to read and he had very little time to do it. After the expected interrogation the night before, Hermione had demanded the group live up to their bargain and study. Harry wouldn't admit it out loud, but it was probably a good idea. He thought this especially when he looked at the first page in his transfiguration text.

Cross heterogeneous liquid purification spells and techniques.

These series of spells are used to turn heterogeneous liquids in to their purified states based on their substituant components. It is recommended that when purifying a liquid to first identify the reactive components and their reactive counter parts. Use schrommans caustic transfigurative principals as a guide.

Harry understood only half of what the paragraph actually said. It was like the author was purposefully trying to horrify him with words. Even Hermione looked ominously confused for a moment before she started to get reference material. The spell list itself was moderately difficult, but he had managed to master 2 of the 7 spells required for that chapter.

If the text books were any indication, now that they had completed their O.W.L.'s, they would now jump into concepts and principals that were far more complex. Harry reflected on when he had trouble mastering the toothpick to needle spell. It seemed silly now when he

looked back upon it. His first year was a joke education wise. Dancing pineapples and porcupine quills. It was laughable now in comparison to the spells and techniques these books hinted at.

Harry was suitably worried about how he would handle catching up with potions and learning and entire 3 years of runes within two years.

He was currently walking down corridors in search of the kitchens. A book firmly placed in front of his face as he turned a page in his guide. It was currently describing the magical locations across Europe. He was surprised to note that there were several dozen other hidden alleys and communities other than what he had visited. It made sense as the average wizard seemed to know less about the muggle world than Mr. Weasley, thus ruling out most from living amongst them. And Harry had his doubts, that a charm could expand Diagon alley enough to house the rest of wizarding Britain.

Harry wandered down the hall until he hit a dead end and looked around.

“Where am I?”

He was currently in an unknown wing of the school some where deep below his usual stomping grounds. Cursing himself for not bringing his map with him, he tried to retrace his steps back the way he came but remembered taking more than one random turn. He had thought he was just taking a well trodden path to the cafeteria to get a late breakfast and maybe find some solitude as he tried to read his book, but some how he had managed to get himself utterly lost.

The corridors themselves seemed desolate and empty. Not a painting or mural decorated the vast stone walls that twisted and turned into the maze that was his current situation. Even the wall scones that provided light seemed to be abandoned and chipped from an unknown period of time left uncared for.

More out of humour than anything else he sarcastically called out, hoping that maybe someone was around to let him know how to escape the labyrinth.

“Hello?”

Immediately a chill descended upon him, not as harsh as a dementors but just as foreboding. He felt eyes on him from every direction and a presence that wanted him away from his current location.

Wind seemed to gush from where he just came pushing him down a corridor. Harry was suitably disturbed as the direction the wind had come from was the same direction as the dead end he had just left behind.

He was hesitant to follow the breeze but seeing as he had no where else to go, he pulled his wand out, and trudged cautiously down the corridor.

He made his way down to an intersection that split in five separate directions, including his own. He was suitably confused as to what direction he should go as each corridor looked just as similar as the next.

He stepped into the centre of the intersection keeping his back to the direction he had just come and was about to do what Luna had done in the department of mysteries, and draw a fiery x where he had just come, but stopped mid way through casting as 3 separate gusts knocked his wand away from his hand and left him shielding his face.

It may have just been him but the directions the gusts had come from seemed to dim slightly. While one of the two other corridors he was being pushed toward seemed to brighten.

Experimentally he picked up his wand and headed for the other corridor.

Gale force winds pushed him back and chilled his face. He was suitably chastised and decided to follow the winds order, and went down the indicated hallway. The winds pushed him on indicating they wanted him to take his leave, but subsided slightly as he kept his pace.

Suddenly the constant breeze stopped and all was quite. The hall was empty of the constant presence he had felt since he uttered his greeting earlier. Harry looked back the way he had come. Everything seemed normal. Turning back the way he was going he raised his wand a little higher and took a few steps around the corner.

Almost comedically; light flooded in from a semi steep ramp like corridor that he was about to pass.

Harry hesitantly peeked around the corner to spy the mystery hallway, and let free a relieved sigh he had not been aware he had been holding back.

Up the slightly slanted but long corridor a three way intersecting corridor with lit corridors and slight chatter resounded. Stopping himself from running up the ramp Harry slowly but carefully made his way up to the top which seemed to take him at least one if not two floors up.

Reaching the end of his journey, his eyes widened in surprise as he spotted the painting with the ticklish fruit directly opposite him. What surprised him the most was the corridor he now stood in, he had never remembered in all his travels to the kitchens a corridor opposite the kitchens.

Chastising himself for considering to re enter the mystery section of Hogwarts Harry stepped away from the corridor into the halls and towards the fruit. Turning around he still spotted the corridor, secretly relieved that it was still there allowing him a chance to revisit it with his map; Harry proceeded to tickle a particularly giggly pear.

As he pulled open the entrance, a multitude of things happened.

One. He found himself being tackled around each leg. As if being hit in the knee caps by soft bowling balls.

Two. He heard a high pitched scream that seemed to call out his name.

Three. He immediately found the dual force of the tacklers propelling his lower body backwards, forcing him to topple, after precariously leaning off the ledge entrance to the kitchen. This resulted with Harry staring up at the ceiling feeling his legs tied down by weights.

Looking down wearily, already having some idea of what to expect he met the eyes of...

"Master Harry Potter Sir came to see Dobby... Dobby is so happy."

"How did Master Harry Potter Sir know I'd be being here...? Professor Dumbledore promises that he keeps it secret? Master Harry Potter is too clever."

Both were said simultaneously, forming a high pitched chatter as if he were listening to bats in a cave. The second more feminine voice shocked Harry slightly though as he had not actually expected to see her.

"Hi Chippy? What are you doing here?" Harry asked bemusedly.

Harry looked down into the watery bright eyes of the feminine dobbie, and knew water works were on their way.

"Master Harry Potter Sir Remembers Chippy's name... Chippy had hoped but never truly believed..." The little elf hyperventilated excitedly as it clung to Harry's legs all the more tighter.

'This is getting ridiculous.' Harry cried mentally as he felt his left shin become moist from the overly large eyes of the critter.

"What Dobby be telling you'se chippy. Master Harry Potter Sir be the bestest wizard ever. He be brave and courageous and far too kind to Dobby. He be the same for youse!" Dobby said smugly, by way of his own little I told you so speech.

"Dobby be right... I bad elf to be doubting such a great wizard. Chippy be so sorry Master Harry." She proceeded to wale the last bit as her tears started to flow more freely down her pointed nose as she looked up to the still horizontal student.

“Chippy you did nothing wrong... besides I saw you most of the summer. Of course I’d remember your name. But why are you here... I thought you would still be at the Citadel.”

Chippy seemed to calm down slightly at the commanding voice Harry had taken... long ago figuring out that it was the best way to hush the little creature. Harry groaned mentally at doobby’s sign of envy that had flashed across his expressive face at the mention of all the time Chippy had had around ‘The Great Harry Potter Sir!’

Sniffing once more Chippy replied “Chippy know that you’s be needing Chippy still. Master Harry Wizard far too small. Chippy needs to make sure you’s be eating enough.” Harry worriedly gulped at the reminiscent motherly facial expression that came across the female elf’s face.

“That be why Chippy ask great Professor Dumbly-door to allow Chippy to work for Hogwarts, instead of the citadel.” She said authoritatively.

Harry thought he would have had more to say to that but the little being had struck him speechless and now he could only stare at her numbly as Dobby agitatedly turned to Harry and asked. “Master Harry be seeing Chippy all summer?”

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It had been a very disturbed Harry who had raced away from the kitchens... he had tried to read his guide but the looks of motherly affection and jealous rage he had been receiving from Chippy and doobby respectively had been more than creepy enough to drive him away. Reasoning that he had gotten on well enough with out the guide for the past few years, he decided that there was no real rush.

He made his way up to the astronomy tower, after making a detour to his dorms to pick up his back pack. He would have made his way down to the library but he really wanted to do his studying alone as he was sure to see Hermione there and she would immediately direct him in how and what to study first. The astronomy tower though

should have been quite empty, and the classroom just beneath the telescope mounted roof should have been vacated.

As he had expected when he peeked in to the room it was empty of any and all presence, more for the thrill of it Harry made his way over to the teachers desk and scattered his things over the bare desk. Professor Sinestra was known for not using her classroom as a office like professor McGonagale, and unlike her tended to be hard to find in-between classes.

Revelling in the exceedingly comfy teachers chair, which he delightedly found allowed him to spin in circles unlike the standard hard wooden chairs the students were given; he decided to get down to business and pulled out his runes texts he had found waiting for him this morning with a note attached giving credit to Remus for the gift. And much more appreciated, his own school notes on the subject. With a letter suggesting Harry start with the second smallest book and work his way up based on the dates of his own notes.

He had not received the outline that professor McGonagale had promised him yet and didn't expect to until the next day so this allowed him to get a head start on his much needed studies.

Pulling out the exceedingly neatly bound but worn notebook, bound by a metal coil, Harry placed it on the large desk and leaned forward as he plopped the second smallest text book on his desk. Stopping to observe the book he frowned in curiosity as he observed the scribbles.

Foreign block symbols seemed to fade in and out of existence across the outer edges of the book. They weren't written on the book so much as they were written within the book.

He had seen Hermione's old text himself when she had purchased it. It appeared to be the same book if not a little newer, but he had never bore witness to the strange block/crescent shaped characters. They were arranged like letters in a sentence and must have been Runes, but there were so many, and they were so tiny he could not imagine someone writing it all out. There was a machine like quality to the text with its own chaotic order that he found surprising in its complexity.

Experimentally he fingered the text along the corners where the text was the most concentrated.

The symbols flared alive at his touch but resumed their pulsing but with much more fervour than before.

Pulling open the text book cover he heard a noise emanate from the book. It was a slow build-up like that off a teapot picking up steam. But then all of a sudden the noise hushed and then boomed.

“Padfoot, so help me if you even try to write, doodle, or so much as scratch another letter in my text book, I will string you up by your balls in front of the Slytherin dormitories!”

Harry gaped at the book as it lay open and ceased its warning. The voice was young and quite, it sounded a little like Terry Booth, but the voice itself was unmistakably Remus Lupin.

Harry cracked a smile at the fact that mini Lupin had threatened Sirius’s balls. It was so uncharacteristically Remus that he couldn’t help but grin insanely at the recording.

With a predatory grin he curiously opened the text to next page and the next, his interest piqued by the runes capability to record Lupins voice. At least he had assumed it was the runes on the book that allowed him to do it.

Running into the first chapter he skimmed the introduction and his interest dimmed slightly at the wordy self endorsing author who listed his credentials.

Deciding to give the notebook a try he turned to the first page. It had a diagrammed box schedule of Remus's class schedule, teachers name (professor Genals), and finally some notes.

Apparently 20 some years ago, professor Genals had opened class with a demonstration and practical exercise.

In the notes it described the function of Runes in the magical world. Apparently they were a form of spell enhancement and programming. Through a very methodical and repetitive process spells were enhanced with varying other functions and degrees, or objects were imbued with different capabilities like being able to fly in the case of broomsticks, or respond to external stimulus.

Following the very thorough notes he had available to him Harry copied the procedure.

Taking out a scroll of parchment, he scribbled down a list of heuristic commands, which were later explained; until he had managed to semi neatly finish his upgrade.

Apparently they were all given spheres filled with water at the end of the exercise.

Stumped for a second Harry paused to think of what he was to do next till he remembered he was far more advanced in his education than the students in Remus's third year.

Stopping to concentrate he waved his wand around in a circle slightly bigger than his fist, once he felt the horizontal direction start to take shape he let his wand deviate around into the other dimensions coaxing glass to form around the edges of where his wand had traced.

Slowly a glass ball, hollow in nature with an opening up top formed. Conjuring objects was a difficult task to master but he had learned the skill partially the year before nearing the end of fifth year, and mastered it over the summer. As it was not a subject covered until late 6th year he felt no rush in mastering it at the time, but his taskmaster of a trainer had demanded that he know how to do the basics at the very least.

Stopping to admire his work, he pulled out his wand and filled the sphere half way with water he had drawn from the humid air. A little charm Professor Flitwick had taught them. There was a way to conjure the fluid but he admitted to himself he was not yet ready to attempt the feat yet. Sealing of the top, and smoothing the edges out he admired his perfectly spherical glass globe, filled with water.

Focusing back on the task he took the paper and with his wand concentrated on highlighting a border around the text he had scribbled while focusing on key runes on the sheet. Immediately a blue blob highlighted around the text he had traced with his wand.

On instinct he put his index and middle fingers together and placed it on the sheet while imagining the effect he needed.

The text flared to life, shining an iridescent white while the blue faded. Harry slowly raised his hand up, and with it, the white iridescent letters followed as they extracted themselves from the sheet of paper, leaving a faint outline from the pressure of the quill from what he had written, but otherwise leaving it utterly blank.

Cheered by his success, using his fingers he guided the letters gently towards the sphere and tapped the object three times. Immediately the lettering seemed to shimmer into the same faded pulse he had seen before and wrapped itself around the object.

Highlighting a portion of the text that was pulsing on the surface of the globe, with the same technique he had on the paper. He tapped it and willed it to submerge into the water within.

Immediately, it did and the entire object flashed a bright green before it started the process of working.

The water started to spin around the surface of the object from within trapping the air in the centre. The text itself, span within the fluid and found its way wrapping itself around the inner surface between the water and the air pocket. Suddenly the script lit up and the air pocket illuminated with a light that rivalled that of his Lumos.

The exercise he had just performed was a large scale version of a wizarding Christmas light. The globe itself was quite beautiful as the air pocket/light caused the light to bend and ripple on exiting the globe, creating a beautiful caustic underwater lighting in the room.

experimental shake. It emitted a low hum that started to melodically play out a lullaby long forgotten.

Harry's eyes lost their battle and opened to take in his friend fingering the thought rod.

"I made them" Harry declared in between yawns as he pulled his feet over the bed and stretched slightly to get the kinds out of his back.

"You can make these... how, bill never told me how he got them." Ron asked excitedly. Harry chuckled lightly as the command for information came not from Ron's mouth, but the rod itself. His friend embarrassingly handed the stick back to his friend after the stick betrayed his excitement.

"Runes" Harry thought and allowed the stick to play it out for him to the surprised fellow Gryffindor.

"Runes...? Should have known. No wonder Hermione was so excited about that class." Ron mumbled in comprehension as he tossed Harry a towel.

"Get ready, breakfast starts in half an hour. Were getting our time tables today." Ron commanded as he made his way out the room. This was one of the few times his best mate had woken him up instead of being woken up himself. Harry had entered the Gryffindor common room at sometime around 12:30 at night and plopped right into bed fully dressed, sans shoes; letting Hypnos take him away as his head hit the surprisingly warm pillows.

After showering and dressing in his other robes and grabbing his back pack he pulled out his runes text and did as the homework assigned Remus years before suggested, and started memorizing symbols and their characteristics. This was the boring part of the course but he was determined to memorize them.

He made his way into the great hall and found his place seated next to a pleased Hermione.

"Your reading a book!" she smiled.

“Ya...?”

“It’s a school book!”

“It is...”

“You’re studying on your own...!” she goaded with a smug smile.

“I can stop if it bothers you?” Harry said theatrically as he started to close the book and put it away.

“I’m glad you started listening to me and are taking your studies seriously.” She said with pride. “What are you studying anyway...? I didn’t see the cover” Hermione asked. She seemed unusually smug for some reason. Harry wasn’t entirely sure why but he figured he would find out soon enough.

“Its Remus's old runes book, he had it sent over yesterday and I’ve been going through his class notes since then.” Harry feeling his own stomach rumble and wondering whether others had heard the call for sustenance grabbed a basket filled with different breads and went in search for the bowl of eggs.

“Remus gave you his class notes.... Can I have a look?” Hermione asked excitedly. She had forgotten her bowl of porridge in favour of staring hopefully at Harry.

Stopping to swallow a bite of bread, Harry took in the more than hungry eyes of his more learned friend.

“I don’t suppose Remus would mind. Tell you what after class tonight I’ll give you the stuff I’ve already covered and you can see for yourself how he learned. They had a different teacher back then you know; names... Mrs. Genny... Gennley... Gen something.”

Hermione more than happy with the agreement happily spooned herself a large bite of porridge and gulped it down. Ron who had been looking at Harry like a man with a aluminium hat on his head just stared mouth agape.

“You’re turning into her...” Ron stated horrified.

Harry was spared any rebuttal by a thump under the table as Hermione went semi rigid delivering a kick to a familiar red head. The red head in question bent over to support his damaged shin. A look of betrayal across his face.

“First you take away my best mate and now you kick me... why must you hurt me so women.” He declared melodramatically.

Hermione huffed with a smile playing across her face as she mumbled “Honestly...” into her cup of tea.

Harry enjoying the by play dug into his plate of food. He was half way through his hash brown when he saw out the corner of his eye another Weasley plop down beside her brother and directly in front of him.

“Hi ya Harry. Any news on when the quiditch trials are going to be?” Ginny Weasley asked as she stole a sip from her brothers pumpkin juice.

Harry paused in his digestive process to contemplate his grievous error.

“Well first, you’d have to ask the captain that...” Harry said with a little nervous tremor in is voice as both Weasley’s looked at him.

“Please Harry, we know its you. You were away for along time Saturday.” Ginny said authoritatively.

“Actually...” Harry tried to correct the youngest Weasley.

“Besides your one of the best players on the team, you’re sure to be captain. It took McGonagale long enough to choose you. We all thought you would have been chosen last year, But I suppose Angelina deserved a try before she left.” Ginny further praised Harry. Making him very red and uncomfortable.

“Ginny I’m not the captain.” Harry declared in a whisper, that all three members of the group heard.

Ginny stopped in her tracks before further ruling Harry a quidditch God and stopped to contemplate his words.

“Oh...” She said with an open mouth and eyes down trodden.

“Next year mate.” Ron said supportively while also trying to save her sister any embarrassment from her long speech.

“Ya next year... maybe.” Harry said with shifty eyes. He had completely forgotten to tell his friends about his forced sabbatical from the world of quidditch. More than likely he would not have time for quidditch even next year as he wasn’t naive enough to believe he could get caught up entirely with all his backlogged studies by the end of may, or even June. Now the problem was letting his quidditch crazed friends know.

“Actually I doubt I’ll be ...” Harry paused in his heart breaking news when he saw a thick file folder, at least as thick as his hands plop down in front of him just missing his plate.

“There are your class notes and course outlines for your sixth year potions class Mr. Potter. I’m afraid you will have to give Professor Kaun a few more days to get you a complete study guide for Runes.” Professor McGonagale announced with a frown as she said the name of her colleague.

“It’s alright professor, Professor Lupin gave me his notes and text books, and I’ve been going over them.” Harry declared politely.

“Did he...” She asked with a smile. “I believe he was taught by Mrs Genals. A fine teacher... she was quite proficient in the craft. Not to say that Mr. Kaun is inadequate in anyway.” Again, a brief frown marred his head of houses face at the name of the mystery runes teacher. Harry had to wonder what the man was like to illicit such a reaction.

"No matter, I am glad you are taking the initiative to study on your own. I'd advise you to pay more attention to the memorization of runes themselves as that is the main area of study for students before fifth year now." The frown increased slightly but stayed just as respectful.

"Professor, what do you mean by now?" Hermione asked intrigued.

Surprised, Professor McGonagale focused her attention on Harry's friends. "Oh Mrs Granger..." She paused to dig out a sheet of paper and handed it to her and another for Ron and Ginny. She pulled back the cover for Harry's manila folder she had plopped down in front of him earlier and revealed a similar sheet of paper inside.

"Your timetables. To answer your question, Professor Kaun has seen fit to teach the students in a different manner than previous instructors. He has been teaching you the theory for the last several years?" She asked Hermione. At her immediate nod, the professor continued.

"Yes, well it has long been taught to students in Hogwarts with practical exercises as well. But due to ministry, and school board interference, the practical aspects of Ancient runes are no longer covered until your seventh year and you will be required to study a further 3 years under ministry run post educational institutions to gain a firm grasp of the art." The frown momentarily turned into a scowl before she reigned in her emotions.

"In any case, to meet O.W.L. Requirements, you will have to have a firm understanding of the Runes themselves and their symbolic representation before you may officially move on into your new studies of the subject." She paused to lean in and almost whisper. "Have you attempted any of the practical exercises yet?"

At the very interested looks he was receiving from his transfiguration teacher he nodded.

"... The Thought Rod, Christmas Globe, liquid player, and I started the wand charger last night." Harry admitted unsure whether he would be reprimanded for his experimentation.

A pleased smile made its way across the elders face. "Most impressive Mr. Potter, ten points to Gryffindor for your effort. They do work, don't they?" She asked immediately.

"Yes Mam"

"Very good. I expect you to show this level of effort in my class as well; I believe I will have you in the late afternoon. I look forward to it" She said regaining in her stiff totalitarian air of competence as she nodded resolutely towards each of her students, and made her leave to hand out the rest of the time tables.

Harry could only smile briefly before he was accosted by Hermione for more information on the practical exercises he had performed. It turned into a very long breakfast and Harry was very glad to be able to take his leave of the interrogation to start Charms.

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"Good Morning 6th years, and welcome to N.E.W.T. Charms" Professor Flitwick announced cheerily from his unsteady book podium. His wrinkled face beaming back at his students proudly taking in their faces. In many respects the man was a tiny Professor Dumbledore, but he lacked the indescribable presence and respect the much taller wizard demanded.

"I have taken the opportunity to review each of your O.W.L Exams and I am most pleased. Many of you have received Outstandings or Exceeds", he stopped to smile charmingly at a few students. "I am quite proud of that achievement, and commend you all. But let's test you all on your skill once more with a new charm. Wands out everyone!" The man cried out hands extended demanding his student's compliance.

Everyone excitedly lay their bags down and pulled their wands out. Most started to stand as was the standard procedure when learning a new spell to be performed.

Harry himself gladly distanced himself from his exceedingly heavy book bag. Standing up and smiling excitedly at his friends. The first day of classes was turning into a fun one as they rarely started with practical work. Ron smiled back as he held his wand like a baton waiting to conduct his magic into a work of art.

“Mrs. Bones, Mr Macmillan. If you will hand out the trays to each desk... one per pair please.” Flitwick gestured to a set of trays housing varying wine glasses with yellow suspended liquid floating in clear white fluid.

As each tray was handed out, Professor Flitwick continued on with the lesson.

“What I will be teaching each of you today is the biotoxin disposal charm. It is mainly used to dispose of dangerous potions and other contagious materials that pose a threat to each of you. You will no doubt learn the charm in Potions under Professor Snapes tutelage, as many of the potions you will undertake this year do require this charm as a safety measure. Professor Snape and I have agreed that the sooner you learn the charm the sooner you may move on.” Flitwick explained as he waved his wand near to the back.

A previously hidden tray silently and gently glided towards him and perched in front of the man.

“Each of your trays carry wine glasses that are filled with a liquid solution that are magically containing the yellow potion. For the purposes of this lesson you are to think of the wine glasses as cauldrons, the clear solution, your unruined potion, and the yellow suspended fluid; the dangerous by product that you must quickly and efficiently dispose of.”

A few students took small steps away from the trays, looking wearily at the yellow suspended fluids.

“Do not worry, the fluids are actually mild skin dies that should you get on your person, will colour you each a lovely shade of blue. My compliments to your brothers Mr. Weasley” Professor Flitwick bowed imperceptibly towards Ron in recognition of the twins no doubt

created prank. Ron coloured slightly at the curious eyes that turned toward him but in the end proudly replied. "I'll pass on your praise sir."

Harry smiled at Ron's support of his pranking siblings. It was pure Weasley, Ron would no doubt endure the stares for his family and Harry was proud of him for that.

"I expect you will Mr. Weasley" Flitwick smiled back.

"Now the charm I am teaching you is slightly different from the spells I have taught you in the past. For one, the wand must not be pointed at the object in question under any circumstance. The spell does not exit your wand in a linear fashion but coalesces in front of you and you mentally will the spell forward. The second part of what makes the spell unique is that it does not activate until the caster wills it too. That means that I may pass the spell through the clear solution without loosing any of the wanted potion. It is a fairly weak spell in that it does not in general effect an area of greater than 1 cubic foot. So you must be careful in how large you let the spell coalesce." Flitwick proceeded to raise his wand arm 90 degrees perpendicular to his body and using his wrist to start a twirling motion with his wand.

Immediately the air in front of him started to ripple as if due to extreme heat. The distorted air started to draw itself together into a large globule. Taking the wand and twirling it in the other direction, the globule started to shrink down to the size of a walnut and silently pop inwards until all the class could see was a bubble like object that bobbed up and down slowly in front of their charms teacher.

At the silent pop from the glob, Flitwick ceased his twirling and raised his arm 45 degrees further above his shoulder. The globule started to move forward slowly, then up, then back down into the top of the wine glass and the solution.

The solution didn't react at all to the presence of the mystery spell, but the glob itself seemed to excitedly vibrate outwards on contact with the substance. With a firm stare professor Flitwick directed the glob down into the solution until it surrounded the yellow potion.

“Now class... once you have directed your ball into the potion concentrate on the item you wish eliminated itself and speak clearly.... Evertamens!”

At once the yellow substance turned char black and exploded outward into the clear solution. It paused millimetres apart, and stood still, suspended, making the contents of the wine glass appear polka-dotted with black specks interspersed in-between the crystal clear substance.

Lowering his wand Professor Flitwick turned to face his students. “The black particles are repulsed by one another and will never willingly touch, but are completely unreactive with all known potions. They are safe to be filtered, strained or scooped out depending on which potion you are making.”

“To start the spell please concentrate on the spell I spoke while you twirl your wand in a counter clockwise direction to form your globule. Do not deviate from repeating the spell every 2 seconds in your mind while focusing on the object you wish vanished. Other wise the energy you accumulated will disperse within what ever substance you had it submerged and possibly create unforeseen circumstances. You may begin”

Flitwick, who had clapped his hands together to jolt the class into action, started to wander in between students to watch their progress. Harry could feel the hesitation permeating the room as this spell they were learning was far more complex than what they had learned from the man before. Harry watched others start to form the energy ball but watched as when the ball tried to pop into completion simply vanished in a wispy ether.

Turning to Ron as he grabbed his own wineglass Ron rigidly focused his stare on the yellow substance and started to twirl his left right wrist. Harry could see the waves of rippling air start to form. They started to draw together and just before they gathered into a discernable ball shape, he lost his concentration and the waves of energy simple faded away.

“Tougher than it looks.” Ron complimented as he rubbed the sides of his head.

“I’ll bet...” Harry commented grabbing his own wine glass. Taking in a deep breath he calmed his mind and tried to drown out the noise of the classroom.

Focusing in on the yellow substance and that alone Harry let his mind observe its shape. It had small miniscule tendrils forming around the exterior that poked slightly in to the clear solution. Almost like a randomized inverted golf ball. Harry lifted his right hand up to shoulder height, all the while twirling his wrists counter clock wise. Mentally chanting ‘Evertamens’, he felt a slight itch start to form on his shoulder blades as he tried to draw in the energy.

Doubting himself slightly as nothing seemed to happen, Harry refocused his mind on the yellow ball and chanting more strongly in his mind ‘Evertamens, Evertamens, Evertamens...’ he willed the energy to ripple in front of him.

About half a second in before he was preparing to stop and start over Harry noticed a crystal clear ripple form directly in front of his eyes. Harry saw through the ripple and the shape of the wine glass warped as if it were a mirage.

Emboldened by his success Harry willed the energy to coalesce where he first saw the ripple, immediately the ripple started to grow and round out as if it were a blurred ball. Noticing the ball was just slightly larger than the yellow potion Harry reversed his twirling jerkily. The ball quivered as if it were about to disperse but held strong as it started to shrink... he watched as energy leaked off the surface of the ball until it reached the desired radius... and then.

‘Pop.’ It was a slightly larger pop than he had expected but he had managed to keep it from dispersing like the others.

Happy with his success he paused his twirling and slowly raised his hand up while thinking about the path he wished the ball to follow.

It did nothing for a few moments but then slowly as if moving through gelatine, sluggishly moved forward until it was directly above the clear liquid. It paused at the surface and seemed to quiver on touching the surface. Harry could feel something within him quiver in sync. It was disconcerting like his stomach was being shaken with a paint mixer. Focusing his entire will on the ball he willed it to move down into the liquid.

Unexpectedly the feeling of his insides being shaken about increased ten fold. He started to get nauseous and lost concentration. The ball of energy immediately dispersed. Some of it sought out the yellow potion in a last ditch effort to complete its task but disappeared millimetres from its surface.

Harry disappointed with his failure but more concerned with his stomach leaned forward and grasped his desk.

“Whoa there Mr. Potter.” A stern but kindly voice cautioned as Harry placed his hand on the surface of his desk.

“Here have a seat.” A chair was pushed behind his weak knees and he collapsed into it.

Looking down into the smiling but semi concerned face of his charms teacher Harry tried to say something but immediately closed his mouth on fear of drenching his teacher in the contents of his stomach.

“Don’t try and say anything for now Mr. Potter just sit back and relax.” The man said comfortingly.

“Did you perhaps feel a little quezy while you pushed the ball down through the liquid? Nod your head.” The man quickly asked as Harry was about to open his mouth to answer. Instead grateful for the suggestion rapidly nodded his answer.

“Well Mr. Potter this is as I assumed. You are semi sensitive to magical disturbances in your core.” The man said with finality.

“Sir?” Harry asked aloud... immediately regretting it as he felt his stomach lurch unpleasantly.

"Stay silent now Mr. Potter, the symptoms will disappear soon. I take it you find it difficult to portkey or floo anywhere? Nod your head!" The man reminded quickly.

At Harry's quick but surprised nod the man smiled. "I myself suffer from the sensitivity. It will take some getting used to but in time with practice the queasiness will pass. If you want I will excuse you for classes. But I must insist you head to the hospital wing."

Closing his eyes and reigning in his senses Harry opened his mouth experimentally and closed it quickly. Trying once more he replied... "Yes, sir. Just give me a moment."

He felt slightly sick at his verbal response but no where as severe as before.

"Yes of course. Mrs. Granger, if you could accompany him that would be greatly appreciated."

Harry heard a feminine voice immediately respond in the affirmative and felt warm hands on his shoulder.

"You feeling okay Harry?" Hermione asked gently. A more rugged hand gruffly patted him on the shoulder increasing the stomach tremors slightly.

"You'll be fine mate. Dads got a sensitive core too. He says it can come in handy sometimes." Harry wanted to thank Ron for trying, but his repeated shoulder pats were not helping Harry's stomach.

:~::~:

"Why didn't you tell us you were sensitive to your core?" Hermione asked excitedly as she carried Harry's bag for him and led him down to the hospital wing.

"I didn't know I was." Harry said tiredly. The queasiness had all but vanished but every now and then he thought he might decorate the Hogwarts corridors with his semi digested hash browns.

"Well why didn't you tell us you got sick with portkeys." Hermione asked. She was going into motherly mode which was never very far from scolding mode.

"I thought I did. Besides, I thought you already knew, with all the times I've taken Portkeys with everyone, I thought my reaction to them was pretty obvious." Harry reminded the girl.

"See I thought it was because of the third task and all..." Hermione's face immediately paled on realization of what she had said and tried to apologize.

"I'm so sorry Harry; I didn't mean to remind you. Its just I always thought you were... phobic of portkeys since ... you know." Hermione stuttered.

Harry surprisingly didn't feel the numb coldness overtake him like it used to whenever anyone ever talked about Cedric or the triwizard tournament. Letting the oddity pass for later review he immediately tried to calm the girl.

"Its okay Hermione slips happen." Harry said mildly. Smiling a half smile at the girl to let her know that he knew she meant nothing by it.

She smiled back hesitantly at first but more warmly as Harry cracked a grin.

"Now if you really want to make me feel better ..." Harry trailed off letting her get curious.

"Anything... name it!" Hermione said resolutely.

"... never mind its okay." Harry said with regret. As if asking her to make him feel better was not worth her time.

"No ask... really I'll do whatever." The girl said with finality.

"Well... "At her interested looks Harry went in for the kill.

“... Tell me about Ron’s big muscular arms as he tackled you off the broom.” Harry swooned theatrically while flashing a few girly winks at her.

Hermione’s face reddened noticeably as she swatted at her friends arm. “Jerk!” She said with a smile as she marched in front of Harry.

Harry could only smile as he teased his friend the rest of the way towards the hospital wing.

“You again.... What have you done to yourself this time?” Madame Pomfrey scolded as she swooped down upon him like a vulture as he entered the hospital wing.

“Nothing... Professor Flitwick said I’m magically sensitive to my core or something...he sent me over.” Harry said testily at the women’s insinuation.

Hermione flashed him a smug smile while announcing worriedly...” Well you did seem awfully sick, who knows, Professor Flitwick isn’t a qualified healer, he could have been wrong.” She said with false concern.

“Too right you are Ms. Granger. Please leave Mr. Potters things by the usual bed. It’s a full work over for you young man!” the women scolded.

Harry flashed Hermione a betrayed look.

“You traitor” He mouthed as the healer dragged him away.

Hermione only flashed him an impish fluttery batting of the eyes as she waved her goodbye.

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Harry had missed lunch and had to endure having Madame Pomfrey call up a house elf to deliver his meal. Unfortunately the elf she had called turned out to be Chippy herself.

Immediately the little elf swooped down upon Harry in a remarkable impersonation of the school nurse chastising him for not taking better care of himself. Madame Pomfrey had found herself a best friend and by the time Harry was finally allowed to leave he could hear the tale end of Chippy sharing her concerns for 'The Great Harry Potter Sirs small size.'

The matriarch could only nod happily along with the elf in total agreement.

'Hermione will so pay for this.' Harry vowed. It was about 4:45 in the afternoon and he still had enough time to make it to transfiguration. As the class was scheduled for 5 and ended at 6:30. Just when dinner was to start.

Contemplating all his most devious ways for retribution, Harry marched his way towards the transfiguration class room and into a sturdy wooden chair awaited the rest of the class to enter. There were already a few Ravenclaws seated and If he remembered correctly, Herbology was just letting out now with the Gryffindors so he should be seeing his friend and the 'other one' soon.

About 2 minutes later a horde of bodies entered the room, within seconds he spotted the red mop of his best mate and the bushy one of 'Her'.

"Hey Harry, where you been we missed you at lunch." Ron asked with a smile. Harry already knew by the amused grin he sported, he already knew where he was.

Glaring coldly at his friend he turned to look at the female one. "You will feel my wrath granger."

"Feel my wrath...? What are you...? Voldemort?" Hermione scoffed.

"Fine ... I suppose you don't want to see Remus's notes then." Harry said with a gleam in his eyes. At the widening of her he knew he had her.

"It was fascinating Ron." Hermione corrected sitting besides the red head.

"Same thing." He corrected as he grabbed a bowl of mashed potatoes from Neville.

Harry allowed the two to argue in favour of stealing some scalloped potatoes from dean.

Harry felt a little flash of uneasiness pass down his spine and nervousness over take him.

Why was he feeling like that? They were defiantly alien emotions but he could just feel the waves of doubt cloud him as he paused his reach for the simple bowl.

A warm body pressed up against him on his right and he turned to see Luna seat herself next to Harry.

The waves of doubt piqued but Harry squashed them in favour of warmly greeting Luna.

"Hey Luna... I haven't seen you in a while. What you been up to?" Harry asked as he focused on the girl.

The waves of doubt suddenly receded as he focused his attention on his blonde friend. Relieved but confused by the odd sensation Harry decided this deserved further investigation.

Luna smiled brightly and relayed her busy day starting O.W.L. Year. So engrossed Harry was in listening to the girl as she told him about the Trestles Hagrid had showed them, he never noticed the looks he was receiving from many of the girls which included a familiar red head.

Harry never did get the scalloped potatoes but he did not forget his repeated experiences with the emotional bursts that had been popping up for the past few days. One day soon however he would

learn the truth of these events. He would one day wish he had stayed ignorant.

AN: Well there you go... Sorry for the long delay but I'm having problems with my computer. Not completely fixed but fixed enough for me to write this chapter.

I posted some pictures on my deviant account of how I picture Harry to be and also a mystery scene for a later chapter in the story. 2 separate styles but they relay what I see in my mind pretty accurately.

This chapter was tough... maybe its because he's starting school or maybe its because I kept going back and forth rewriting little bits to suit later chapter. Either way, I've pretty much confirmed one ability Harry has, there's still more to it than what appears but it's what starts Harry on his quest to figure out what's happening to him.

I hope you guys like my runes explanation. It's the best way I could think of to explain magical objects they sell in Diagon alley and such. If it was so easy to make, I'd assume everyone would be making brooms and wands and other fancy expensive tools on their own.

Some words I used in this chapter

Hypnos... Greek god of sleep farther of Morpheus who was responsible for dreams.

Kaun.... Rune Meaning Ulcer. A sore or open wound that can spread... look on wikipedia for more information.

Evertamens... Just made it up... could mean something but doubtful.

I've given you all some hints not as to what is to come. Now off with you

And happy belated new year.

Story updates might be slow for a while... starting school tomorrow. Give me time to get back into a good rhythm.

Quazi

Chapter 10 – Pain and suffering... So it begins.

“Harry James Potter, I hereby sentence you to Azkaban!”

Harry stared at the man who announced his fate. His face, the epitome of shock and outrage as he listened to the obese little man.

“On what charges?” Harry cried. The icy chains binding him to the interrogation chair coiled ominously at his pleading voice.

“For the murder of Ginny Weasley.” Fudge who was regaled in splendid red robes boomed across the packed courtroom. He theatrically raised his hands as if he were looking unto the heavens demanding God smite Harry down himself.

“That’s right... You killed me you bastard!” Ginny yelled shrilly from Harry's right. She stalked around Harry with a horridly smug smile.

“Wait don’t you see... she’s alive... how could I have killed her.” Harry tried to reason. Pointing feebly with his still bound hands at the woman who was accusing him of her own murder.

A murmur went across the wizengamont and bulbs flashed from newspaper reporters.

“ Harry James Potter, for your wilful denial of your crimes I have no choice but to further sentence you, to death!” Dumbledore immediately replied. Taking the place of Minister Fudge. A vindictive cold smile not unsimilar to that of Voldemort himself graced his face.

Harry dumbstruck by the mans obvious betrayal looked on in shock.

“What but sir... why... why are you doing this to me... you just saw her, she’s alive!” Harry begged desperately trying to understand the mans actions.

“Alas Harry, Where have I gone wrong.... You have clearly been performing Dark Magic... It is clear that I have failed you...” The man said resignedly.

“How the hell do you get that.” Harry demanded.

Immediately his cheek burned as he turned his head away from the man. If he could he would have held his face in shock at the hit.

“Don’t you dare talk to the Headmaster like that you traitor” Another shrill voice demanded in clear rage.

Turning his face to gaze on at one of his best friends. The one huffing in anger as she retracted her hand from slapping him.

“Hermione what’s going on... there sending me to Azkaban... they’re going to kill me!” Harry begged his friend to understand.

“As you should be you disrespectful idiot!” Hermione spat. She immediately spotted the minister and Dumbledore seated together, and swooned at the site of their authoritative presence.

For some reason it appeared as if lighting was being used to shine down at his two convicts... They looked angelic under its gaze as they posed a regal pose.

Harry swore he heard Hermione sigh.

“What the Hell is going on?!” Harry yelled.

Immediately the room blinded him as flash bulbs went off. A feathery green quill shot in front of his face.

“Mr. Potter... Harry, why did you do it... its okay, you can tell me. The public loves a rebel” Rita Skeeter winked at him seductively, scarring Harry deeply.

“I didn’t do anything...” Harry tried to defend himself.

“Now Harry there is no need to lie... we have all the evidence we need to know it was you...” Rita gently scolded as if she were scolding a puppy.

“What evidence?” Harry demanded.

“ Why... you’re a parselmouth, and that delightful Malfoy boy told us all about how your evil and tried to crucio him.” She said blankly humouring him.

“What are you talking about... this is some trick by Voldemort... Malfoy’s practically a death eater himself. How can you believe him?” Harry tried to defend himself but all that came out were a series of hisses.

The crowd gasped. Hermione looked at him scandalized. As if he had personally called her a mudblood or something.

“Why I never.” Rita declared. Turning away and scribbling on a sheet of paper... his hand burned immediately as he felt lines write on his own hand.

The word, ‘Evil!’ was cut over his left hand and seemed to be jaggedly emphasizing his new label.

“See what I mean everything I said was true.” A haughty voice declared from behind Harry. Immediately, Harry's chair swivelled to face the smug pale face of his school enemy.

“ Tell the truth Malfoy.” Harry demanded angrily.

“ Don’t talk to Malfoy like that, he’s worth ten of you.” Ron bristled. Popping up from no where and immediately defending his own archenemy.

“Ron what’s gotten into you... you’re my best friend.” Harry pleaded. Utterly fed up with this insane world.

“And it makes me sick... I should have known you were no good. How could you Murder my own sister. You filthy Slytherin!” Ron boomed at his friend. His hands clenched into fists.

“Its true... I’ve known all along.” The sorting hat called seated on top of the still living Ginny. She could only nod in sad confirmation as she

strolled up to her brother and stroked his hand soothingly. Comforting him in his own grief for her.

“There are so many things wrong with this picture...” Harry cried out in frustration.

Immediately there was a bang and the front doors to the courtroom, which looked suspiciously like the large wooden doors to the great hall, banged open letting in a magnificent white Owl that soared gracefully towards Harry.

“Hedwig...” Harry cried in relief to see his long time friend.

The bird soared towards him... taking her sweet time as the room seemed to expand slightly to give her a long enough flight to allow for suspense.

Hedwig flew down toward him, wings extended slowing her decent, her entire posture that of a perched eagle.

Taking a few steady flaps of her wing to keep her decent majestic, she flew over Harry's head.

Splat!

Harry felt a cold liquid drizzle down the side of his face.

“ Et tu Hedwig!” Harry demanded in anger as the bird immediately flew away. A black feather descending in her wake to land in a pool of blood that lay at his feet.

Looking down upon the liquid Harry saw the ends of the feather soaked in the liquid... its tips drenched red. The black glossy feather lay there serenely as if point to the centre of the pool of blood. Some how Harry was completely unchained and free to look in the pool.

Hesitantly leaning forward and leaning in, Harry saw his reflection, his eyes closed his scar prominent. The rest of his face completely faded out in the blood's surface.

The humid air that was unusually persistent at the time making his skin feel filthy.

Harry, deciding that he didn't want to risk waking his dorm mates grabbed his map and invisibility cloak as well as he slipped out of the room. But not before taking a glance at the clock.

'4:14... Damn it!' Harry mentally cursed as he stalked down stair. Careful not to make a noise. He knew he wouldn't be able to go back to sleep, and this meant either making his way back to the common room and waiting it out for another two hours before he could freely explore the castle... or take the chance and watch his back for the rest of the night/morning.

Deciding to live dangerously... Harry firmly swung the invisibility cloak over his head. Pushing past a snoring Fat lady who muttered incoherently in her sleep as her portrait was moved by an invisible force.

Harry murmured his declaration to the map and stalked the halls as he searched for any one to watch out for.

Letting a sigh escape his body as he ascended a stair case... he realized that no one was patrolling.

" I guess even filch has to sleep" Harry unwittingly said aloud. Pausing to listen to his own voice echo around him, he took a gander at the castle corridors.

No one was awake... only him.

The halls were bare and even the paintings slept.

He was cloaked in darkness and in a literal cloak of invisibility.

Harry let the thrill envelope him as he was rejuvenated by the concept. The night was his and for another two hours... it would stay that way. He could do as he please and no one would be the wiser.

He tore off his invisibility cloak and revelled at his exposure... goading the world to catch him.

Excitedly running down the halls he made his way to the prefects bath room... hoping that the password was the same as he whispered. "Pine..." Pausing to consider the fact that he was whispering, he looked around the corridor and seeing most of the paintings empty, their inhabitants away snoozing probably in one of the painted beds that decorated the paintings of many other works of magical art within the building.

Harry confidently and even slightly louder than normal announced, "Pine Fresh!"

The door handle clicked and Harry turned the knob allowing him entrance into the elaborate room.

Quickly bolting the door from the inside Harry took his time to search the room. He had intended to take a bath to soak up his time but now that he felt the need to wander he wanted a quicker solution.

Wandering the room Harry circled the large pool, slash, swimming pool taking in the room. Seeing a slightly hidden corridor Harry decided he could start his exploration within the room.

Walking down the marble steps letting his hands glide across the again marble walls, Harry peeked into the room the corridor led.

He stopped to gape at it all.

There on a slightly raised dais was a tall table with a simple set of controls in the same style as the bath outside but with fewer options. The room was grand for the single occupant shower... Harry could tell it was a shower by the large nozzled disk that dropped down from the ceiling. It dripped a steady drip on the large dais. Its shape pointing out like a convex lens... the walls glittered with dew and intricately drawn patterns that encircled the circular room seeing a shelf carved into the wall Harry quickly placed his clothes within and proceeded to strip.

Almost longingly he took steps up towards the dais. Again, marble, steps led him onto its surface which was grated to allow water to flow down. The 2 meter diameter dais clanged slightly under his weight. Walking toward the raised table with the controls in the centre of the dais Harry walked forward. Turning a red crystal handle while also turning a blue crystal handle, Harry heard a rumbling noise rushing in from all directions.

Listening carefully he followed the noise as it seemed to emanate from the exterior walls and travel closer. Looking up, Harry saw the metal concave dotted spout vibrate ominously. Understanding that water was flowing in from around the room Harry waited with bated breath for the shower.

The metal disk gave one final drip and then water gushed out. Like an onion, the exterior layers of dots that rimmed the perimeter of the disk, spurted streams of water, then moving inward several different layers spouted water until finally streams pummelled Harry from above the head.

Gasping and sputtering slightly under the unexpected force Harry shielded his face as he looked down into the grate he stood upon that drank the excess water.

Luckily he had managed to set the temperature to an ideal setting as to not freeze or scald him but it took a moment to get used to the force.

Soon though the force stopped being excessive and started being soothing. Enjoying the water massage releasing tension in his shoulders he leaned against the rounded table protruding from the floor.

Letting his neck swing down Harry felt the water pound his soar back.

Harry had noticed once he had awoken that it felt as if it had been pummelled repeatedly by bludgers.

He had been worried since it mirrored the site his dream back had felt the excruciating pain explode from. To top it all off, it itched something fierce.

Frustrated by the showers inability to scratch his own back for him Harry swung his arm behind him and tried to scratch it himself... it was slightly to the right and left of the spot he couldn't reach but he managed to lay a finger on his left most itch.

Immediately flashes of images sped across his vision. Those same snake eyes he had in the vision, black fluttery clouds of nothingness whooshed by, and then finally the Dursley's terrified faces.

Retracting his hand suddenly from the onslaught of images Harry stopped to take in a breath.

Those images had been so sudden they had taken him by surprise, the first two were unfamiliar, well the first he remembered seeing hazily in his dreams, but the second was a mystery. The last though, that was the most familiar as he had consciously viewed the scene not two months earlier.

It was the last time he had seen his relatives faces before he had taken his leave of their home forever. The sheer terror on their faces surprised him, and the fact that he took a little greedy pleasure in the terror he knew he had inspired disturbed him greatly.

It wasn't just a memory of that moment, he was feeling the thrill even now. He felt the dark lust for their obedience to his will cloud his mind momentarily, his power to have ended their existence making him sick and giddy all at once.

Dumbledore had explained to him that it was actually Voldemorts mind clouding his judgement as the ritual started to take place, not unsimilar to the rage he felt for his headmaster when he looked into his eyes momentarily the year before.

But he some how knew that it wasn't Voldemort clouding his judgement now as he sank bonelessly against the stone table...

seating himself on the grate as the water continued to pound down upon him.

'I wouldn't actually hurt them, I'm not like that. Ya, there slimy bastards and I wish them a hard life, I wouldn't mind seeing Dudley get his comeuppance for all the times he's hunted me and made my life miserable. But I wouldn't...'

"You think the freaks from the train station were the only ones you would have to answer to. Wrong!"

...

"One day I will be able to do magic, and I will always remember what you two have done to me."

The flashback of his own words startled him... even now as he considered his own words... 'Did I actually say that, or was it Voldemorts influence.'

He was free of the Dursley's now, he never had to return... and he had the ability to do magic now.... Would he one day decide to make good of his promise.

"No... I ... I wouldn't" Harry stuttered out quietly to himself. Letting his own voice, so unsimilar to the hiss he remembered speaking to his relatives in, comfort his troubled mind.

Saying it more firmly to himself he started to rise... turning off the shower carelessly he walked away from the dais and toward his towel.

Cursing his inability to sleep properly, Harry forcefully dried his head. 'I mean they're not even semi realistic, me being sentenced to Azkaban.' Harry snorted at the thought. Laughing silently at the ludicrous betrayals and the cameo appearance of the hat.

In a better mood Harry walked away from the bathroom fully dressed in his Hogwarts robes with slightly damp hair and his backpack. Glad he had bought one with more than one compartment, he

impervious one and put his wet clothing inside, leaving the other for his books and things for the day.

Cursing himself for letting a dream ruin his slight adventure before the rest of the building awakened Harry checked his watch to see how much time he had on his hands.

Shocked that he had spent close to an hour in the shower itself he re-evaluated his plans,

“ Can’t really explore much now, an hour doesn’t seem worth it.” Getting used to talking aloud, Harry wandered the halls of the school. Deciding to take a gander outside. With the brisk but still warm air that had plagued the area, Harry strolled outside and took in his surroundings.

The sky was at twilight, with no sign of the sun quite yet but with a pinkish orange tint near the east by the ends of the lake, Harry made his way over to perch himself by the tree by the lake, he had so often studied under, Harry made himself comfortable as he awaited his first sunrise.

Stopping to set his watch for 6 so he knew when he could enter the great hall he let his exterior robe comfort his back as he leaned against the hard stone.

The sunrise was taking its sweet time and Harry was hoping it would reveal itself to him soon as he let his eyes droop.

Listening to the water slosh gently against the beach of the lake and hit the slight cliff of the Hogwarts ground Harry's eyes started to droop lower and lower.

The next thing he knew he was awakened by a furry something wagging its self in front of his face.

Swatting at it Harry blearily opened his eyes to stare into the amber eyes of a ginger beast.

“Bah!” Harry screamed in surprise.

“ MeeeOW!” The Ginger Cat moaned at him as it sat on his lap and looked at him curiously.

“ Crookshanks....” Harry breathed a sigh, fearing the intruder on his space to be one of Hagrids creations, Harry let his hand wander down the side of the cat as he scratched it behind the ear.

A deep purr was his reward. Leaning forward and arching his back into Harry asking for more. Harry paused his ministrations to glare at the cat. “If you want me to continue doing this... don’t wake me like that again.” Harry continued on after a dismissive meow begged him to continue.

Sighing Harry let his other hand start to scratch the cat as he looked up into the sky.... He had slept through the sunrise... he was slightly disappointed but he planned to wake up early once more and do the thing properly then.

Looking back down Harry saw the sun glint off his watch. Squinting his eyes and bending his watch away from the light Harry saw the time.

“ Oh crap.... Sorry Crookshanks Harry called as he basically dropped the cat and grabbed his things; making a mad dash towards the castle. It was almost 8: 15, and at 8:45 the first bell would ring throughout the halls. Letting the mystery of where the bell actually resided pass in favour of racing through the halls, Harry ran corners and passerbys as he made a dash to get something to eat.

Passing a familiar series of paintings and ornamental displays he knew he was but two turns from the corridor that would take him to the great hall. Slowing his speed but still at a fast trot he swivelled a corner and....

“Oww” He and a female voice cried together as their bodies slammed into each other.

Swaying slightly Harry managed to keep his footing but the unfortunate victim did not as she toppled backwards from Harry's momentum.

Quickly reaching out a hand to grasp her dainty one, she tugged surprisingly harder than he had imagined and he was pulled back down towards the earth landing on top of her.

An "Ouf" was heard in the same sync he they had managed earlier...

Rubbing his soar elbows and prying himself up he looked down into the dreamy eyes of a familiar Ravenclaw.

" Oh... I'm sorry Luna." Harry said in surprise at his victim.

" Well good morning to you too Harry." Luna said with a smile as she looked up into the emerald eyes of her friend.

"Morning Luna... sorry about that" Harry said sheepishly as he continued to kneel on his right leg and look down upon the girl. They're things strewn across the floor in a chaotic pile.

Smiling at him in the same dreamy smile she raised her hand indicating she wanted help up. Harry quickly obliged and pulled the girl to a standing position as he too stood.

"A bit late for Breakfast Harry, What could you have been doing." She asked in the same dreamy voice she always had as she reached up towards his head. Letting his eyes wander up her slender arm, passing a silver bracelet and up to her palm, he watched as she retracted it to reveal a slightly damp leaf.

Blushing at being caught, Harry ran his hands through his hair letting a twig clatter out of his hair.

" Yea... that... well long story short, I fell asleep trying to catch the sunset outside by the lake." Harry admitted. It was a little funny in a 'that's something new' kinda way.

Luna's head tilted and her eyes took on a slightly different look as she gazed at him with a much more charming smile.

"That sounds like fun.... Maybe one day I could join you." She said with smile.

Harry smiled at her sincere request." It's a date."

Stopping to realize what he said he fought to contain his blush. Quickly turning away... he grabbed his robe and back pack from the floor while laughing nervously. Stopping to pick up her things as well he never noticed Luna's reaction to his remark. By the time he had managed to sort out their things she had been turned away checking the floor for any remainders.

"I think that's everything... Shall we?" Harry asked as he carried both their bags over his shoulder and headed over to the door. Checking his watch he saw that they still had about 20 minutes to eat.

At her dreamy smile he pushed open the door and walked in laughing at a comment she made about how she hoped he hadn't swallowed some creature while he slept by the lake. She commented on how that was a sure way to get spattergroit.

Remembering Ron being diagnosed with the terminal disease Harry chuckled at the remark.

"You going to sit with us today." Harry asked as he paused on his path to the Gryffindor table as he noticed she wasn't following.

"That's alright, I need to make an appearance at my table... you know house loyalty and all." Luna whispered. Harry only smiled at her and took her bag from over his shoulder and held it out for her.

"See you later then." Harry asked as she grabbed it from him. She smiled as she turned away from him.

"Most likely" she sing songed as she walked with a bounce over to her table.

Harry for a reason unknown to him just grinned and walked over to the gryffindors ignoring the whispers that followed him.

“ Hey where were you mate?” Ron asked as Harry sat opposite him with his back to the wall.

“Long story, I’m famished.” Harry declared as he stole some sausages from a platter and fixed himself a large breakfast.

“ Harry...” Hermione asked suspiciously.

“Hmm...” Harry asked as he chewed his hastily buttered bread.

“ Is there a reason why...” She paused to reach over and pull a twig from his robe. It was bent slightly with a leaf dangling on its end.

She left the question unfinished waiting for Harry to fill in the blanks.

Harry surprised pulled off his robe and looked at it... it was covered in bits and pieces of foliage and dirt.

Cursing himself... Harry forgot his breakfast in favour of whipping out his wand and whispering a couple various cleaning charms on his robes, making them more presentable. Not wanting to show up to class looking like he had spent the night frolicking in the forbidden forest.

“Part of the long story...” Harry answered Hermione belatedly as he started to put on his robe. He had not realized that more than one person had been listening in and observing him... and he also had not noticed those looks being split as they took in a Ravenclaw who was idly twirling a leaf as she bit into a muffin. Her focus entirely on the book in front of her. A more dreamy smile than usual on her face. Her robes a little ruffled from their run in and a little smudged with dirt as well.

Ron who had been following the student bodies example and splitting his looks between the pair let a surprised look momentarily flash across his face, but then a more Cheshire grin spread as he reached over and pat his friend on the shoulder in congratulation.

Not entirely sure why he was getting the support Harry cautiously thanked Ron as he checked his watch moments before the bell was to ring.

Quickly grabbing his book bag, making a sandwich out of the left over bacon and egg on his plate, and pulling Hermione up by her arm... he sped away from the great hall.

“Come on we got Defence now.” Harry demanded. Barely leaving his friends enough time to grab their things and chase after their highly energetic friend.

Harry didn't know why but he was feeling very energized. He had barely gotten any sleep and had just woken up again after falling asleep outside, he had barely eaten, he was constantly running all morning since he awoke, yet he never felt so... alive.

It wasn't just that, he was also happy. After his slight angst fest in the showers he had feared he would be in a bad mood all day but for some reason he was as chipper as he had ever been.

Not looking a gift horse in the mouth, Harry didn't question it as he all but ran to the defence class room. His friends panting to keep up.

“What's the hurry mate...?” Ron breathed heavily as he caught up to Harry as he was about to enter the door.

Hermione at a more dignified trot only huffed slightly before regaining her composure and looking at her friend curiously.

“Your different today Harry?” She half stated, half questioned.

“ Different, in what way?” Harry asked brightly as he chose a seat up front close to the windows... the sun, bathing the table in light.

“Well your acting weird for one...” Hermione huffed in exasperation. Harry was fairly sure she was also using the huff to regain her breath but didn't comment.

"I suppose. What else..." Harry asked knowing she had more. Not really caring as she suspiciously took in his appearance.

"I'm not sure... Something about you is different?" Hermione puzzled as she stared at her friend. She was forced out of her reverie by an unwelcome intruder on their conversation.

" Maybe he's just getting uglier... the scar doesn't help." A jeer emanated from across the room.

Swinging around to stare at the blonde ponce Harry only smiled.

" Good morning Malfoy..." Harry took in a exaggerated breath through his nose, and then exhaling loudly while staring at the blonde. A smirk playing across Harry features.

Malfoy's face hardened indicating that he got Harry's message. He was about to say something but Harry spotted Neville cross between his vision of him and Harry decided to greet him instead of wasting his breath on Malfoy.

" Morning Neville, How you.... Neville?" Harry frowned slightly at the irritated glances Neville was throwing behind him. The ragged look about Neville did not bode well for his friend either.

"Everything okay Neville?" Ron asked taking notice of his room mate as well.

"It's nothing." Neville grit out as he refused to look at his friends.

Hermione looked like she was about to comment before a bang erupted from the front of the room. Seated at the desk cloaked in old dusty robes was a grim fellow. His fist firmly planted on the wooden table. The class observed the man, stunned as no one was sure how he had managed to get in the room. Harry was stunned for an entirely different reason and he gulped slightly at what he knew was to come...Pain.

"My names Tiberius Connely. I Train Special Aurors to become Certified Order Of the Phoenix Soldiers. I have fifty four years of

experience fighting as an Auror my self, and another 24 as a lieutenant for the Order. You all may refer to me as Sir.” The man finished with a fierce smile, promising something unpleasant to the person who would make him unhappy.

‘They’re goes my vacation away from the man.’ Harry groaned as he prepared him self mentally for his usual torture.

“I will only be here until November... After which you will have a different teacher. I am used to well trained personal under my tutelage. People who have earned my respect with their skills and talents. Instead of compensating and allowing for your inexperience... you will compensate and provide me with What I have and will continue to expect from my students; Skill, talent, and a drive to better yourself. Any foolish, childish behaviour and you will be out of my class and studying on your own until you get your new teacher. “Is that clear.” He glared at the class some how making each and every person in the room feel like he was glaring at them specifically.

No one said anything but a clear, acquiescence was palpable in the air. Harry swore the man grinned slightly before pivoting and heading back to his desk. Waving his right hand quickly in a gesture of violent dismissal sheets of papers flew all around him and placed themselves in front of each student.

“ These are your spell outlines. You will notice a corresponding date beside each spell listed. By the date indicated I expect you all to have that spell mastered and ready to perform for me. You are responsible for learning how to use the spell. You may come to me for assistance if you are having trouble but If I find any one who has not learned to master a spell by the given time period... lets just say I haven’t decided yet on an appropriate punishment.” The man said all this while keeping his back from the class. If he had he would have noticed the paling and slightly outraged faces of some of the students. The list was long and seemed to ratio out to 3 spells per date.

Harry was pleased to note that the first 6 classes and the 14th, the D.A. Students had already mastered or were close to mastering before they were forced to end the year before. Harry was caught up

well into the 84th spell listed having been drilled by the man all summer.

“For now... Lets Have some Fun” The man grinned a familiar grin as he brought out some of his toys.

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“The mans insane!” Ron declared loudly as he finally exited his own personal hell.

“I don’t know... he seemed to be holding back” Harry said in slight disappointment. Each of his friends looked at him in appalled wonder.

Realizing he hadn’t told them, “Oh.... He’s the guy who I’ve been training with... good old sir” Harry smiled in remembrance.

“That’s the man you’ve been training under.” Ron said in horrified horror.

Even Hermione didn’t try and defend him as she was too busy rubbing her shoulder from where she had been zapped a couple times.

The class had partaken in what Harry like to call, a light work out. The man had magicked their tables into different towers and obstacles and had the class fight it out between each other. The catch was that he was also going to be involved. He didn’t hold back as he indiscriminately launched spells at anyone standing still long enough.

In the end Harry had obviously won out of his entire class and stayed conscious long enough to battle his teacher to a standstill for a good 7 minutes before Sir called the exercise off.

He was holding back in a sense, as he wasn’t tossing any of the more painful curses he had been using on Harry during the summer, but he did toss more than a few that would leave his class beyond tender.

Sir had left a letter on Harry's notebook before proceeding to reawaken his students. Giving Harry time enough to read and hide his letter.

“ Tonight and every night; 9:30 sharp, Great Hall, don't be late. No one is to know under Professor Dumbledore's Orders.” Was all that was written.

Unsure whether Dumbledore had meant his own friends as well Harry decided that he wouldn't mention it to them either.

Harry quickly said goodbye to his friends as they left for separate classes. Not planning to see them until later when they were going to start Hagrids class, Harry grabbed his potions book, some supplies, and headed to the room of requirement.

Concentrating on the what he needed as he walked past the stone wall Harry watched as a door materialized.

Walking inside Harry gaped at what he saw.

He got his request, a potions lab.... Slightly bigger and brighter than Snapes with counters instead of wooden desks to prepare his potions on. A nice comfy swivel chair like the ones muggles made, and a lot of fake windows making the room much brighter. What had him gaping though was the hundreds if not thousands of feathers flowing in a circle around the ceiling.

They created a giant ring of black as they continued to circle.

Thinking that he wanted to see one of the feathers up close, a single feather exited the continually circling ring, and floated down onto Harry's waiting hand.

More than disturbed Harry looked at the rooms creation.

It was the same feather in his dreams... sans the bloody tip. It felt slightly waxy to the touch and it gleamed unnaturally but other than that... it was just a simple feather. No different than any other birds.

Pocketing the feather Harry considered leaving now and coming back to do his potions work later... but decided to stay and study, bringing up the incident with his instructor and maybe Dumbledore tonight.

Thinking firmly Harry focused on the feathers above him.

Almost hesitantly Harry watched as the feathers one by one started to vanish. Soon the ceiling was bare of any moving object. With a relieved sigh Harry checked his pocket for the feather he pocketed and headed to the table with a cauldron waiting.

Unpacking his notebook, a quill and the outline professor McGonagall had delivered, Harry cracked open the notes to see what professor Snape planned on teaching his students.

With a quirked eye Harry looked over the step by step notes and comments for the potion listed with warnings and varying different reactions based on deviating from the recipe.

This was far more detailed than what they were given in class. Harry looked over at the list of varying reactions based on mistakes made and could see himself making more than a few of these, when he tried to imagine Neville, he could almost see him exploding a cauldron when stirring with a silver spoon instead of a wooden one.

Harry was sure that if he were in the class he would be given a abbreviated recipe on the board and told to get to work. Never once knowing all the possible ways he could go wrong, only the truly thorough students like Hermione, who practically memorized their text books could truly succeed in the class.

Deciding not to stoop to Snapes level, Harry decided he would save his judgement until he got to question Hermione on the class, she being the only one amongst his close group of friends who was taking the class.

Reading further Harry was surprised to find detailed drawings of wand movements. Harry had to admit that if Snape had done them, he had some artistic talent.

The spell, the wand movement described appeared to be a form of magical charging charm. Looking through the notes Harry saw similar drawings describing different wand movements. Apparently sixth year potions did require some foolish wand waving after all.

Checking the date, at the bottom of the page, and most of the others, Harry found that they were just ten years old. Some more recent than others but all starting around 1986.

Harry deciding to practice the wand movement before starting the potion first cracked open his text book hoping to find a description of the spell. After some searching, he found a description. The spell itself was used in varying fields to imbue objects and other subjects with a limited supply of magic. Like charging a battery. In the case of potions, it was used to elevate the natural magical levels to a desired level giving potions different strengths and characteristics.

Finding a description of the correct casting, which thankfully had a very distinctive orange hue to it. Harry practiced the charm on a piece of slightly dry mandrake root.

Half an hour into his self teaching he had finally managed to get the spell correct and watched as the root glowed a fruity orange color for a few minutes before fading.

The spell left the caster heavily drained for a few moments before they started to regain their strength. It was purely a mental affliction, and in no way took magic away from the person casting it, but it did hinder the caster in that they had trouble concentrating momentarily.

This seemed troubling in the fact that after casting the spell in potions one had to usually tweak their potions in varying ways or else ruin their potion....or worse.

Harry had to admit he was a little intimidated by the prospect, memories of Snape plaguing his mind, condemning his potion talent, diminishing his already starved confidence.

Firmly telling his mind to shut up, Harry decided to at least attempt it first before giving up.

Looking at the potion, a mild sleep aid. No where near as potent as dreamless sleep but still capable of knocking Harry unconscious for a good 3 hours, Harry gathered his ingredients.

'I can do this... its not so difficult... drop oleander powder, stir, increase heat, stir, drop boomslang and salt water, use spell... and so forth... not hard at all.' Harry thought to himself.

With a deep breath, Harry dropped the indicated amount of oleander powder.

After waiting a good 30 seconds Harry was slightly worried when the water inside hadn't turned a yellowish green. Reading over the outline and finding no reason why it shouldn't have already turned. Harry checked the bottle he held the powder in.

It looked and seemed fine.

"Maybe it's the room?" Harry said aloud. Looking at the cauldron full of cold water and unreactive powder, Harry studied his situation.

'Hold on...' Harry paused as something hit him. "Cold?"

Looking at the nonexistent fire... Harry could only laugh as he had forgotten to set the pot to boil before he started.

More relaxed after the stupid mistake than embarrassed by it Harry evanescoed the contents and started a new. A Calm smile playing across his face as he worked on his potion.

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Walking down the halls, Harry made his way toward the great hall with a spring in his step. He had managed the potion just fine on his own and his confidence skyrocketed at the fact. His ego boosted greatly by proving Snape wrong.

Harry had idled away the rest of his time redoing the potion three more times and then studying for runes... finally memorizing at least a third of the runes he had already used; which was impressive in and of itself as he had used many in his experimentations with the exercises. Harry could only smile widely as he turned a corner.

“Ouf” In a remarkable display of déjà vu, Harry let out a grunt of surprise as he bumped into a shorter figure.

Not having as much force as he had this morning, neither toppled over but the other person firmly held on to Harry's arms, and like wise, Harry held on to her waist to keep themselves steady.

“Hello Harry” a familiar voice declared within Harry's arms.

“Hi Luna... we got to stop meeting like this.” Harry greeted as he looked down into the large pale eyes of his crash buddy.

A multitude of soft tinkling laughter the two turned to their heads to face the noise makers.

Harry and Luna turned to see a group of first year girls giggle at them as they quickly passed by heading into the great hall.

Automatically, the two students stepped away from each other and dropped their hands from holding the other as they noticed the over observant eyes of the children. Neither looking directly into the others eyes.

“Well, that would be to bad... it's a little fun.” Luna said with a smile as she took a step back from Harry. Her cheeks slightly red, ‘probably from trying to regain her breath after getting the wind knocked out of her’ Harry thought resolutely shutting his mind down, preventing it from thinking of any other reason.

“Well I suppose it is...” Harry said with a smile as he walked over to the already open door and waited for Luna to walk in first.

Tilting her head acknowledging the gesture, Luna walked in, ahead of Harry.

Taking a look down Gryffindor table Harry saw that his friends had not arrived yet.

Frowning slightly as he spotted Pauline and her siblings waving excitedly at him, Harry contemplated what to do next.

“Join me?” Luna asked. Harry turned to face the girl who was saving him from the family. With an ample amount of gratitude, Harry smiled happily at her.

“You have no idea how glad I am that you asked.” Harry said with relief as he followed the girl with the slightly redder cheeks.

Shrugging unapologetically at the trio of Gryffindors Harry followed Luna to her table.

He hadn't received any of the jeers he had the last time he had sat down as most of the Slytherin upperclassmen were not present yet, but he did get more than his share of stares and whispers.

Ignoring them the best he could Harry focused on the girl beside him.

“So tell me what's been going on lately. I haven't been able to talk to you in a while.” Harry asked as he passed Luna a plate of sandwiches a more than willing second year Ravenclaw had handed him.

Grabbing what appeared to be a turkey sandwich, she took on a thoughtful expression as she replied.

“Actually, everyone's been acting strangely.” She remarked with the ever persistent frown deepening slightly as she served herself some crisps and offered Harry some.

“How so...?” Harry asked as he wondered what could seem strange to the girl who believed creatures inhabited mistletoe.

“Well, a lot of the girls have been giving me strange looks and asking me to study with them, or have a chat.” At Harry's unremarkable reaction Luna further explained.

“That doesn't usually happen you see. And they've been acting strange, helping me carry my things, telling me that I dropped something, holding a door open for me.” The girl explained as she bit into her sandwich.

“Is that all, it just sounds like there being nice?” Harry commented as he too bit into a sandwich.

Stopping to place a hand in front of her mouth as she continued to eat, she swallowed abruptly. “ But its strange for me... usually by now, I have to write a letter to daddy asking for a replacement textbook as one of mine would have gone missing, or someone would accidentally knock my things over and not have time to help me pick them up... as I said, people are acting weird.” Luna commented blankly with her familiar dreamy voice. Harry could tell by her voice at the beginning of her speech, that these incidents were standard for her, and they were having an effect on her, even if she did hide it well.

Wondering what that dreamy exterior actually protected, Harry could only smile soothingly at the girl.

“ well, I'm not sure why their acting differently, but its about time. Maybee they just want to get to know you... be your friends.” Harry said resolutely. Offering up a optimistic theory to the girl.

“Maybe...” She conceded, humouring Harry. He could hear the doubt in her voice but there was a hint of hope that shone in those pale grey eyes of hers that left Harry feeling warm inside.

“What about you Mister Potter, save any damsels in distress or fight off a dragon?” she asked changing the subject with a teasing smile.

“Just looking for the right damsel... did the dragon thing in 4th year.” Harry deadpanned playing along.

“Well don’t look to hard, the damsels sound like bad eggs, if I were you, I’d stay home and find yourself a nice wench.” She said with a serious face as she took a lard bite out of a crisp.

Harry could only snort as they argued the fine points of damsels vs. wenches for the rest of their lunch period before he was pulled away from the conversation by a frowning Hermione. It was an inopportune moment as Harry was about to ask what she was, a wench or a damsel.

Harry waved goodbye to the girl as Hermione who appeared to be annoyed by something dragged him and a equally curious Ron to Care of Magical Creatures.

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“What’s with Hermione?” Harry finally got to ask his friend as they left care of magical creatures.

Hagrid had introduced to the class, a bat like creature with a sinewy tale and birds beak that let out a noise that nullified any sound within the area. Making the class mute until they either shut the bird up or evacuated the area.

They had spent the entire class writing notes to each other trying to communicate.

“I’m not sure?” Ron admitted, perplexed by the girl. The girl in question had quickly walked away from class to head to her arithmancy class. The thing was that she had not looked at Harry or Ron at all during the entire class.

“She was fine before class, and then she suddenly went all...” Waving his hand in frustration Ron finally waved at the castle where they had last seen their female friend last. “...That!”

“Were you guys arguing or something?” Harry asked cautiously, as Ron seemed a little wound up himself.

Ron opened his mouth to say something heated but decided to take a breath and more calmly responded. "No, we were getting on fine. She was explaining something about what sprout had mentioned the day before, Susan passed by, said hi to us then we got in to the great hall and we spotted you... and Hermione's like 'that'!" Ron said with a more refined version of his previous hand gestures.

Not entirely sure what to make of it Harry could only frown and shrug as the two friends made their way to the Gryffindor common room.

Hearing a fluttering of wings Harry turned to see a pigeon perched along the open window of the corridor they were walking. Watching as the bird raised a wing and preened its feathers Harry remembered his incident today.

"Hey, strange thing happened with the room of requirement." Harry said immediately as he searched his pockets for the feather.

At the curious look Harry explained the flying ring of feathers that had appeared in the room as he continued to search himself for the feather.

"I took one... I know I had it in my pocket somewhere?" Harry commented as they stopped in front of the fat lady.

Taking off his backpack and unzipping it he searched for the feather inside.

"Maybe you lost it?" Ron suggested as he leaned over Harry's shoulder to take a look.

With a surprised look he immediately questioned..." Why do you have a towel in there..."

Harry answered automatically..." from this morning... I think I did lose it... damn." Harry cursed, missing the looks Ron was giving him. Nor the intrigued looks the fat lady gave him as she eyed the boy and his backpack with a gleam in her painted eye.

It was another few hours where Harry spent relaxing with his friends in the common room. Hermione entering to find her friends in a game of exploding snap. Her mood much more improved as she talked with them. Neither wanting to ruin her brief moment of calm, decided not to ask her about her previous behaviour. She still frowned every now and then but she was much friendlier.

“Harry, you should probably study for potions, I’ve got the notes from Snapes class here; I’ll help you make the potion...” Hermione said as Harry was deciding on what to do with his bishop.

Distractedly Harry replied “Its okay Hermione... I don’t need to...”

“Harry, you can’t fall behind, potions is much more complex this year as well. We have to apply spells to our potions for one.” Hermione scolded as she pulled out a notebook and her wand.

Harry irritated as she was distracting him, cut in as she was about to add more.

“Hermione, I don’t need to study...”

“Harry...” She tried to interrupt with a disapproving frown.

Raising his hand abruptly in a sign for her to stop as he continued to stare at the board Harry continued in a more firm voice.

“As I was saying, I don’t need to study because I already did.” Harry explained with finality.

He turned to observe her less than impressed face.

“What?” Harry asked in confusion.

“It’s not just reading the book you have to actually be able to make the potion.” Hermione reprimanded, incorrectly assuming Harry had only stared at his course notes for an hour.

“Obviously...” Harry said as he rolled his eyes. Digging into his backpack he pulled out a vile of clear purple liquid. His best attempt with the potion.

“I’m not an idiot Hermione... That’s the potion Snape was supposed to teach you to make today.” Harry tossed her the firmly capped vile and let her see for herself, as he stared at her in annoyance.

Fumbling and almost dropping the vile Hermione stared hard at the liquid and uncorked it to take a hesitant sniff.

“You cast the spell?” she questioned as she stared at the liquid.

“I did”

“Which spell?”

“The Charging spell... the boomslang skin and salt water glowed orange.” Harry said, correctly anticipating her next question.

Closing her mouth as she was about to ask the question he already answered she frowned at the vile before declaring.

“You need to practice... it’s too dark. You made a mistake somewhere.” Hermione announced tossing the vile back at her friend.

“It is not... the notes clearly stated that it was supposed to be a clear violet. This shade” Harry defended, annoyed that the girl was criticizing his work. The hard work he had done that had boosted his self confidence and had given him a sense of pride.

“It is. You need to practice” She declared resolutely, a frown upon her face as she crossed her hands across her chest and stared at her friend.

“You can’t be lazy Harry, if you don’t get a good grade in potions you can’t become an auror.”

“Magical Researcher” Harry corrected.

“Yes that...” Hermione dismissively waved aside. This angered Harry for some reason, as if she was dismissing Harry himself.

“I’m not being lazy, I just don’t see the need to go over it again as I already covered it.” Harry said with frustration. Harry remembered the argument that took place during the summer. Not wanting to drag Ron into this as Harry looked over and noticed the apprehensive looks he was sending each of them, Harry tried to calm his tone down. Also not wanting to add another rumour into the gossip mill that was Hogwarts as the common room still held more than a few gossip starved classmates who would no doubt spread word about their inevitable blow up.

“Look can we not do this... I’ve studied, and I’m caught up with all my subjects.” Technically Harry was ahead, as he had studied well into the second week of runes via Remus's notes and he was much farther ahead in defence than anyone else.

“Harry, I know you. You need to study more. Knowing you and Ron, you probably only glanced at the notes for your other subjects. You don’t pay attention to things when you don’t have to. Why if it wasn’t for me...” Hermione paused her speech thinking better of what she was about to say.

‘To hell with it!’ Harry thought, angered by what she was insinuation.

“If it wasn’t for you what?” Harry asked dangerously. Ron too, seemed interested by her answer as he frowned at the girl imperceptibly.

“Look, you two know that with out me you would have probably done far worse on your O.W.L.’s than you did. I know how you two study... you need me.” Hermione said confidently.

“Is that what you think?” Harry asked emotionlessly.

“Look I’m not calling you dumb or anything, you have a lot of good qualities, but you need someone like me to help you focus on your studies.” She explained kindly taking Harry's emotionless question for hurt.

She was wrong. It was anger. 'Is this what she really thinks of me.' Knowing Ron, he too was probably thinking somewhere along the same lines as himself. Harry looked up into Hermione's eyes, startling her with his glare.

Grabbing his bag and pocketing his vile of potion Harry stood.

"Sorry Ron, I don't really feel like chess right now." Harry said calmly to his friend as he took his leave of the common room in anger.

"Harry..." Hermione said cautiously. Realizing she had not used enough tact in her explanation.

She didn't get a reply in return as Harry closed the portrait door shut as he walked away from Gryffindor tower.

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It was a determined Harry who had hidden in one of the dungeon classrooms that were abandoned.

He was surrounded by his textbooks, wanting to prove Hermione wrong, he spent the next 6 hours studying as much as he could. He was frustrated though as he was having trouble retaining the knowledge.

Looking down into his charms book he read a sentence blankly as he replayed the conversation over and over in his mind.

"You can't be lazy Harry..."

"...with out me you would have probably done far worse..."

Images of her frown and disapproval flashed across his mind. Then other images flooded in. His cousin calling him a freak, His aunt telling him he was worthless, His uncle wishing he had never suffered his presence.

Looking down at the page Harry realized he had been reading the same page over and over for the last half hour, Harry slammed the book shut and threw it at the stone wall.

"You made a mistake ..."

"You don't pay attention..."

"...I know you."

Huffing in frustrated anger Harry proceeded to throw the rest of his things against the walls.

"...I know you."

From outside the room no one would have heard the deafening crashes of objects smashing against stone or other objects as Harry proceeded to vent his frustration at anything within reach. Harry had placed a silencing spell on the doors as to not notify anyone of his presence... now it was protecting him from anyone finding him in a rage.

Panting in unsatisfied weariness. Harry leaned against a wall and took in his handiwork.

The room was a disaster... books with bent pages and some half torn out lay strewn around the room... the tables which had obviously been charmed to withstand more force than would appear possible lay at odd angles around the room as Harry had toppled more than a few. Unfortunately one or more chairs had not survived his encounter.

All Harry could hear and see though was the faces of Snape, Vernon, Petunia, Umbridge, Fudge, and many others who criticized him throughout the years.

Harry was sad to note that now Hermione's face had joined their ranks of his mental tormenters, declaring him an idiot, declaring him unworthy, declaring him unwanted.

Harry felt a wetness on his cheeks and with fierceness, quickly scrubbed at his face trying to rid himself of the sign of his weakness.

‘No... I wont... I’m better than that... I’ll show her...’ Harry declared. Challenging himself to prove to Hermione and himself, that he was much more than what anyone knew him to be.

“I’ll show her...” Harry verbally whispered to himself as he removed all evidence of his emotional outburst from the room.

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“Your early Potter....good.” Sir congratulated as Harry walked into the great hall.

“Sir” Harry said stiffly as he stood in front of the man. Unconsciously taking on a stance similar to Bobs and many other Order members in the presence of the man.

He only smiled a little smugly before quickly turning away.

The room was the same as usual. The sky played out across the ceiling and the four empty house tables stood firm. The only difference was the desolate appearance of the room. All decoration and banners had been removed and the room seemed hauntingly barren. A Ghost of its more cheerful warm standard.

“I don’t have all my equipment with me so we can’t run all the drills I put you through before... and obviously I can’t have you work out as long as you were at the Citadel... but from now until 11:00 you will train for the rest of the year... don’t make any plans.” He warned as he let his hand glide over the surface of the hufflepuff table.

Turning quickly he pulled his wand, and shot a silent blue beam at Harry as he had already leaped over said table and made his way to the front of the room.

Harry having expected the move emotionlessly avoided the spell as he ran along the Ravenclaw table shooting as fast as he could at the man.

They had reached a stage in their training where they had stopped using words in their incantations, forcing their opponent to dodge spells cast, never knowing whether the spell being shot at them was a stunner, or cutter.

The inconvenience of losing some of the control with silent casting was made up in spades by the indecision and caution the technique provoked in the enemy.

“Good potter. Now I’m going to teach you a new trick today.” The man called while shooting out a couple of invisible ripples at the teen.

Harry also used to this style of teaching, continued to fire back spells while listening to the man explain to him some new technique or spell.

“I like to call it, mining.” The man called.

Harry suddenly stopped his forward momentum feeling an odd shudder in his gut as he took another step ahead.

Harry saw a surprised look cross his teachers face as he paused his casting to look at his pupil.

Harry who had not stopped casting spells at the man stopped as the man raised his wand and shot out purple sparks that illuminated the room in a violet glow.

The signal, their own way of knowing to stop their attack.

“Impressive Potter”, the man called as he lept back over the hufflepuff table and strided over to Harry from near the front of the room.

“Sir?”

A frown marred the mans face. His sharp nose and greying hair accentuating the small facial gesture.

“You did study the technique ahead, didn’t you?” The man asked.

"I don't think so sir. I'm still not sure what the technique is sir." Harry remarked.

"Then how did you know to stop. Or was that luck?" The man questioned as he inspected the youth.

"I'm not sure, I just felt a strange feeling in my stomach as I got closer." Harry said with confusion. Quickly adding in "sir" as it was expected of him. A sign of discipline and respect he had been drilled earlier on.

"Well that isn't right..." the man claimed with a frown.

"Are you proficient with leglimency?" The man asked suspiciously.

"No Sir. I don't even know Occlumency, Sir." Harry admitted.

"Your sure... and it was because of this 'feeling' you stopped, you sure you didn't get indigestion... this was in response to my spell mining?" The man asked with an odd gleam in his eye.

"No, It wasn't indigestion, it was different, like a portkey but vibrating Sir." Harry stated.

"Odd... well I suppose we will just have to test this out... first let me teach you what spell mining is." The man commanded.

"Spell mining is the mental projection of a spell in an empty space. By spell mining you take away the velocity factor in a spell like a stunner for example, and instead force the spell to appear floating in any position around you." The man explained authoritatively.

Harry was intrigued by the technique; already seeing the many possible ways of exploiting the spell.

"I will teach you later how to hide the spell... but for now lets get you casting a spell."

Recognizing the command Harry raised his wand to a ready position and awaited his instructions.

“Now I want you to look around the room once more... memorize what it looks like... where everything is and recreate the image within your mind. Tell me when you have it.” The man demanded.

Harry looked around the room observing the position of the tables and benches, the teachers table, the beams above him and his position somewhere in the middle of the room between Ravenclaw and Slytherin tables.

“I’m ready” Harry declared as he visualized the room.

“Good, now what I want you to do is concentrate on a Lumos spell. See its effect in your mind... feel how the light feels as it hits your skin, anything that you associate with that spell I want you to concentrate your mind on it until you can basically see it with in your mind.” The man instructed.

Harry closed his eyes, recalling every aspect of the spell.

“Now within your mind place your imagined Lumos anywhere within the room and make it a part of your picture of the room.” The man said in a low calm tone that soothed Harry.

Harry did as the man asked and placed the spell within his mental room of the great hall.

At Harry's nod that he had done so the man just said, “Then Cast it.”

Harry did so, silently casting the spell with the image in his mind. A pulse seemed to vibrate up the shaft of his wand.

Immediately his closed eyes felt the burn of a bright light shining through his eyelids.

Opening them warily, Harry saw that the ball of light floated directly above the teachers table straight ahead, completely separate from his wand.

A trickle of smug pride flashed across his mind as he imagined Hermione's face if she could see him now.

"Very good potter. I hadn't expected for you to get it on your first try." The man praised.

"Thank you sir." Harry said graciously not being able to hide the pride in his voice.

"Now... you are going to mask the spell." The man said resolutely as he took a step back.

"How sir?" Harry asked.

"You figure it out... you know the basics... learn quickly!" the man called as he re-jumped over the hufflepuff table firing curses at Harry.

Before Harry could fire back the man called.

"I'm forbidding you from casting another spell tonight that isn't mined somewhere in the room. Get cracking potter." He goaded as he continued to fire spells at the dodging Harry.

It would be another hour and three separate enervates till Harry finally figured out how to mask the spell properly... he still had to practice casting his spells faster as he rapidly imagined the spell effects often inches away from his instructor only to find the man already moving away from the spot.

Harry had made major progress that night, but he had a long way to go...

"I'll show her..." he whispered to himself as he stalked down the lonely corridors of Hogwarts; tired and hurt in more ways than even he could understand.

AN: Well here you go... Managed to write another chapter in between classes. The beginning was a spoof on all those Azkaban Harry's where he's convicted under the most ludicrous pretences, not to

mention all the outrageous betrayals. I do admit I do have quite a few Azkaban favourites so I'm not badmouthing the genre.

Some of you will probably be able to figure out what I have planned to happen next with my Harry/Luna angle. And some of you, if you work at it, and have read enough fanfiction, can finally understand why I named the story Blood Tipped feather. It takes some assumptions But I layed down a lot of clues in this chapter.

You may have complaints about Harry's constant mood swings this chapter. Well... I can understand that. He did do a lot of flip flopping, but I do have a reason for some of it... the rest just kind of happened as I wrote it. All in all it was a bad day when compared to the good bits for my Harry.

Neville gets himself a side plot... you guys can probably guess why he was agitated.

I'm thinking of dropping my Ginny subplot as it is just too much work to try and fit her into a chapter. If I do I'll probably tell you what I had planned. Not really original but it had its effects.

Before any of you complain about Harry's tears; I don't plan to make him cry every other chapter, but he's kind of... broken inside, and having a friend doubt him on top of his many doubts(I see him as having many doubts, like any teenager) really hit a nerve. Plus I needed a reason to set some other things in motion.

Notice Harry's doing a lot of impressive magic on his first few tries if not the first one entirely. He seems to be learning things much quicker than seems normal... What could the author be thinking? Hmmm?

Anyway... I don't promise another quick update as I hadn't even planned to update this chapter for another week. I found my laptop power adapter smoking a few days ago so I'm sure you can see that I'm having technical issues at the moment.

Literally smoke was coming out of it. It was freaken hot.

Anyway till next time

Quazi

Chapter 11 – Draco Dormiens Nonquam Titilandus!

Harry had spent the entire week in a foul mood. Ever since Hermione's fight earlier in the week, Harry had spent his time eating, sleeping, and attending classes; at least that is what the others saw.

What they didn't see would surprise them.

His nights were spent with the new temporary Defence teacher, practicing skills and magic's that would leave most of the students gaping in shock from both the skill required to perform them, and the sheer violence they invoked. The rest of the time which Harry had dubbed study time, which had taken up every moment in between his other responsibilities, would find Harry locked in the Room of Requirement.

Runes had become more of a hobby, and Harry delighted in learning the varying strings of runes needed to perform different effects. He was having a little trouble learning all the runes needed for the subject, but he was quickly memorizing the structure and meanings of the mysterious characters.

The rest of the time in the room was spent keeping Harry a step ahead of the potions class with Snape. He had made it a goal to always be at least one class ahead of Snapes class. This had eventually required Harry to start sneaking back into the Gryffindor common room, an hour or more past midnight, but he let the smug pride he felt consume him everytime he passed his old potions classroom.

Harry had quickly learned that he could not pull objects from the room and use them in other parts of the castle. He had found this out when he requested a vial to store his recently finished potion into. The potion had luckily been a moderate fire retardant, but still, the lesson had left his already sour mood, bitterer than before. It also didn't help that the 'God damn itch' wouldn't go away. It was starting to become distracting and Harry was in no mood for any at the moment.

Hermione had been trying to corner Harry; a guilty frown marring her face as she sought out the famous Gryffindor in hopes of making peace. But with Harry's increasingly agitated mood, and his scowl he had directed at her more than once, they had not talked since the incident.

Ron himself cycled between sympathising with Hermione, and frowning at her, out of remembrance of what started the split. He had not approached Harry yet to mend the friendship, but it was clear that it was soon to come.

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"Those of you who have not successfully performed the spell, will be expected to have mastered it for homework. Have a good weekend." McGonagale called from her desk as she proceeded to seat herself, and sort her papers.

Harry who had come close to turning a chicken wing into a owl wing, undid what magic he had cast on the dried up old bones from dinner, and vanished the contents of his tray away before packing his things hurriedly.

Silently cursing himself for spilling a few papers, he quickly dropped to the ground and picked up his sheets of notes. Grabbing the last sheet, he saw a feminine hand stop in its process from reaching for the same paper. Already knowing whose hand it belonged to and thankful he had grabbed the sheet before she had. He turned away from her pretending he had not noticed her presence.

"Harry?"

Ignoring the uncertain call from the girl Harry stiffly stored his things in his bag.

"Harry... I've been... um that is..." the feminine voice of his long time friend stuttered as she tried to communicate with the silent male.

Ignoring the guilt that he was experiencing from his own silent treatment, and cursing himself for feeling guilt at all; Harry zipped his bag up, and swiftly left the classroom and Hermione behind.

He had quickly lost the anger he had felt from the indignation the girls words had stoked in himself. Now all he had was pride, and he wasn't willing to give that up just yet; it being the only true constant in his life, helping him keep whatever semblance of dignity he could muster after living with the Dursley's and through a number of other normally humiliating and cruel events in his life.

'Your just being a git now...' his conscious scolded.

'Don't care...' Harry mentally called back frustrated that his own mind had not sided with him.

'yes you do...' his mind whispered back tauntingly. Unfortunately his conscious was still using Hermione's voice as a reference for its own; thus not helping him in his issues with his female friend, as her voice constantly lectured him inside his own head.

Storming down the stairs, luckily having them not change, as he made his way down to the kitchens.

Not feeling like being gawked at by the school and hearing their whispers as he passed through the student body, he decided to endure the odd behaviour of the house elves.

Stopping as he felt a breeze blast his face he noticed he had walked himself straight in front of the dark corridor he had gotten lost in just under a week ago. Again the strange feeling of being watched emanated from the corridors walls. As Harry was still standing in the normal hallway, the kitchens directly behind him, he noticed a sort of clashing between the two. The hallway he stood in now was warm and cozy, it felt childish and adventures. The Corridor though, the corridor felt ominous and guarded; like walking into a nest of acromantula, Harry felt eyes on him from every direction.

Taking another wary look back at the corridor, Harry proceeded to tickle the pear and walk into the elves den.

“Master Harry Potter sir, Chippy be happy to see you’s...”

“Dobby too, especially Dobby!” a male voice interrupted quickly.

“Yes... doobby too be happy to sees young master.” Chippy said with a frown as she looked questioningly at the grumpy elf.

Dobby had gotten over his initial jealousy over Chippy being in “the great Harry Potter Sirs” presence all summer, but a competitive streak which had taken Harry by surprise, now motivated the little elf.

Every action the female elf took, Dobby would try and do better. It was both amusing and disturbing, as Harry was starting to fear the green eyed elf.

“Hi guys... can I bug you for dinner here...” Harry didn’t even get to finish his question before a swarm of elves happily guided Harry toward a table and started setting him a plate. Some how the elves seemed to know what he wanted to eat so there was no issue with their choosing, but their proportions... that was something else entirely.

Looking at the plate which would have challenged any Weasley, Harry turned around and thanked the room. A twittering of happy noises resounded and cooed from a dozen elves who were watching him nervously.

As Harry ate he tried to strike up conversation with the passing elves or with doobby and Chippy themselves. The passing elves either squeaked their surprise and ran off quickly or fussed over Harry more. Dobby and Chippy, he had more luck with as they stopped to talk; Dobby more than Chippy. He even managed to get them to sit down for a minute each; Harry thought that an accomplishment in itself.

“Dobby...” Harry asked, as he managed to stop the elf from twittering about.

“Yes Master Harry Sir.” The elf said happily at being referred to by name.

“When do you guys have breaks...? I hate to come in here and always bother you when you’re working. Maybe I could visit when you get your break.” Harry asked with a smile.

No matter how ... strange Dobby could be, Harry did consider him a friend, and didn’t want to always bother him to serve him meals. Even a short chat during the little fellows break didn’t seem like too much.

“Oh Harry Potter Sir is being silly again, Dobby don’t get breaks.” The little creature laughed happily as if Harry had said an amusing limerick. An elf who had been passing by seemed to chuckle slightly at the thought.

“You don’t? Ever?” Harry questioned in surprise. He was glad he wasn’t talking to Hermione at the moment; ‘if she had been here with him, she would have easily exploded in indignation.’

At his happy negative Harry put on a puzzled frown; a little surprised Dumbledore wouldn’t grant breaks for the hard working creatures.

“Well when do you guys get a chance to eat, or sleep?” Harry asked hoping maybe Dobby just misunderstood him.

Dobby seemed to frown imperceptibly. “Sleep... Dobby does not...”

Before the little elf could further shock Harry, a flaming inferno burst not a foot away from Harry's dinner. Squinting slightly but recognizing the signs that Fawkes was paying him a visit, Harry started to lower his wand.

The flames started to recede and Harry saw the regal form of Fawkes peaking through the fire.... A letter grasped between his talons.

“Hey there Fawkes... how you been?” Harry asked as he scratched the bird's scalp, ruffling his plumage in a way to create an odd resemblance with himself in the process. The bird didn’t seem to

mind as he leaned into the touch and crooned a few thankful melodious squawks.

It never ceased to amaze Harry how alike the common phoenix was to a well trained puppy. Loyal, loves to be played with, and if you scratch them just right... they start to stamp their feet.

Such a motion started to occur and the letter lay forgotten at the base of the birds talons.

Fawkes crooned once more before leaning away and then focusing on the adoring eyes of the house elves who were moments away from offering feed and other niceties to the bird.

Fawkes seemed to pause in thought before letting out a squawk and waddling toward a eager little elf holding what appeared to be diced apples.

Harry enjoyed the site of the normally regal bird hobbling across the table like a penguin but refocused on the envelope that lay haphazardly in front of him.

Dear Harry

I believe I must speak with you immediately. Please finish whatever activity this letter has found you performing and join me in my office as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

Albus Dumbledore

Noting the urgentness of the letter Harry thanked doobby for the food, said his farewells to room and made a dash to the Headmaster's office.

Running past student and objects Harry was starting to enjoy the jog around the castle. Normally he would have been slightly winded but the training must have been doing something right as he seemed to glide past anything and everything.

He turned a corner and almost ran into a blonde blur. Quickly side stepping and turning around to apologize for nudging the student, Harry saw the willowy figure of a familiar Ravenclaw.

"Sorry Luna.... No time to stop. Got to meet Dumbledore." Harry called as he jogged backwards slowly so he could speak to her face.

Luna just gazed at him with a raised dreamy eye. "Hello Harry..."

"Hi Luna..." Harry grinned with a smile as he continued his backwards motion.

"Are you just going to bump and run Harry? I mean I hardly even dropped my books this time" She called with a slightly sardonic smile on her still dreamy face.

Harry could only grin as he pointed his finger at her..." Tomorrow, breakfast at 8:00... I'll bump into you then, I promise".

Luna raised her own hand and pointed it at him as he was just starting to turn. "I'm holding you to that." She called while wagging her finger at him in warning.

Harry let out a small chuckle and dashed to the right. He passed a few more classrooms before reminding himself he was going to Dumbledore's office.

Finally making his way to the gargoyle he jogged to a stop... not really wanting to stop his forward momentum. He paused and mentally huffed as the headmaster had forgotten to give him the password again.

He was about to start his usual guessing game with the stone, when the gargoyle leapt aside for him. Not willing to look a gift horse in the mouth Harry walked at a more sedate pace up the stairs and knocked on the wooden door.

"Come in Harry" a familiar voice beckoned him.

Pulling the door aside Harry walked in and stopped as he took in the occupants of the room.

“Sir?” He asked as he stared at the various official looking wizards and wizards in the room, and Madame Pomfrey who was physically restraining Remus from leaping at Harry.

“Harry, I’m glad you could join us so fast. There is much to discuss but first if you could allow these gentleman...”

The men didn’t even wait for Dumbledore to finish before they dashed to Harry’s side and started waving their wand to and throw, in familiar hand gestures. A corpulent looking woman took notes on the side, reminding Harry of Percy during his trial scribe phase.

Other than the invasion into his personal bubble, no one had laid a hand on him.

It was another half a minute before the podgy woman finally declared. “He’s clear!”

A collective sigh broke free where Madame Pomfrey looked to be near tears and McGonagale who had gone unnoticed beside Dumbledore, wore a broad grin that seemed slightly drunken as she looked at each of the wand wielding men with grateful eyes.

“Professor, what’s ...” a familiar modestly dressed man grasped Harry shoulders. He too like McGonagale wore a grateful smile and had Harry not known better would have believed the white coated men and women had just delivered his first born child.

“What’s going on?!” Harry asked a little worried by the reaction of the people in the room.

“Yes of course... my apologies Harry.” Dumbledore smiled unapologetically. Motioning towards two unnoticed chintz chairs, Harry and the still clinging Remus took seats in front of the man.

“Do you recall Harry, at the beginning of the summer you warned the order of something?” Dumbledore prompted. His carefree smile starting to vanish under the weight of his own words.

“Umm...” Harry tried to remember but the start of summer seemed so long ago now.

“You told us you sensed some dark magic around you” Remus reminded Harry kindly; his hand on Harry’s shoulder firmly holding on as if Harry were to disappear the moment he let go.

“Right... that.” Harry remembered and nodded thankfully to Remus for the prompt.

Pausing he contemplated what they were insinuating and started to get a sinking feeling in the pit of his stomach.

“I see you are starting to grasp the seriousness of the situation.” Dumbledore said sadly.

He paused and removed his glasses. Wiping the lenses clean with the cuff of his robe he placed them upon his face again. For that brief moment that the glasses were off, Harry was deeply unsettled.

“14 hours ago, a Mr, Jacob Polkis was admitted into Surrey memorial hospital with what appeared to be a sudden epileptic attack. Since that time, 12 other residents of surrey living near or around privet drive have been admitted.”

Harry’s eyes were wide with surprise and shock. This had not been what he had expected.

Following a hunch, I ordered some medi wizards to meet with your relatives. Your aunt, and cousin were in good health, but your uncle had started to develop similar symptoms. We were fortunate enough to find him when we did and quaranteed him.” Dumbledore said with a little less dread.

“I’m sorry to say, but I’m afraid as of 2 hours ago, everyone admitted to the hospital has died.” Dumbledore said morosely.

“What... how? What happened?” Harry stammered. He didn’t care that his voice sounded a little scared itself, even if a group of strangers bore witness to the great boy-Who-lived, flabbergasted.

“Yes well, we are investigating the matter. As far as we can tell, a series of potions and dispersal wards were placed around your neighbourhood. The effect is evident, we believe that the wards around your home have protected you from the attack but those unprotected by the wards were left unprotected.”

“But uncle Vernon... he lives under the wards to. Shouldn’t he have been protected as well?” Harry asked a little hysterically. Harry didn’t even question the fact that he was displaying fear for a man who he had wished dead on more than one occasion. This was far to close to home. Literally.

Dumbledore signalled for the rest of the room to clear out, and at a terse nod from all but Madame Pomfrey, Remus and his own head of house, the room cleared.

Once everyone was out, Dumbledore continued. “Yes, we believe that the wards were unable to protect him. As you know they are based on the love magic your mother afforded you.” At Harry’s quick nod Dumbledore continued. “We believe that based on the nature of your relationship with your uncle. The wards considered him a treat and excluded him from any protection... and perhaps amplified the potions effects in him.” Dumbledore said awkwardly, clearly ashamed of the notion.

“Considered him a threat... and what do you mean the nature of our...relationship.” Harry slowly started to comprehend what Dumbledore was sugar coating.

“I believe you understand Harry” Dumbledore stated sadly.

“ He wanted me dead... so the wards helped try to kill him.” Harry said with a dull tone in his voice.

“Now Harry, in no way was this your fault, nor was it your uncles. The blame lies solely on the shoulders of the death eater responsible for the potion, and on me. We were fortunate enough to get to him when we did, and he is believed to make a full recovery” Dumbledore commandingly informed him.

Harry didn't say anything, but knew where the true blame lied. Unfortunately not everyone in the room agreed with the young man.

Harry could feel Remus hand tense on his shoulder and could practically sense the pity being directed at him from his head and nurse.

He felt the sympathy and it made him angry.

CRACK

Glass sprayed from all around him, windows shattered, and wood burned. The itch in his back sang with joy to this display of violence. It made him feel euphoric and giddy, and angrier.

“Mr. Potter ...stop”

Harry could hear the pleading voices around him. The urgency in their words, but it all blurred together, it was like listening to the cries of ants and he was their torturer.

“HARRY, STOP!” a booming voice commanded, breaking free from the ants and humbling him. The itch felt challenged his back throbbed with indignation at being commanded to obey, but obey he did as he turned dead eyes to an agitated but worried headmaster.

The rush of wind that had become constant but gone unnoticed suddenly died down. There was a sudden lack of noise only broken by the slight tinkering of broken glass that continued to fall.

And then everything went black.

... ..

“Accidental...”

“It was no accident”

“...too strong, maybe he was being possessed at the moment”

“No, it does not work that way thankfully.”

“But there is a connection headmaster, who knows what the dark lord could do through the boy.”

“I have done research and studied each of the scans we have taken of Harry’s scar, It is clear to me now that Harry could not have been possessed by Voldemort from long distances” Dumbledore voice answered knowledgeably if not a little guiltily.

“Perhaps, but I should continue his occlumency training none the less to err on the side of caution.” Snakes silky voice wheedled.

Harry immediately opened his eyes to the bright sterile walls of the hospital wing, and the pesky presence of his least favourite professor.

“With all due respect, Not a chance in hell sir” Harry groaned out as he tried to sit up in bed.

A glass of water was pushed in front of his lips and he slowly drank the cool liquid. Another hand from the same person passed him his much needed glasses. Turning his head he found Professor Lupin was the one to thank and did so with out haste.

“Now Harry, Professor Snape does have a valid point. I know your lessons with him may have been less than ideal, but ...”

“No sir, I am not willing to go through that again with him. Sorry but that’s final.” Harry said firmly. It hit him moments later that he was telling Albus Dumbledore “no” and demanding it stay that way. He did a good job in his own opinion of hiding the shock of his own boldness.

Harry turned to face Remus who was still holding the glass aloft for him. He expected to be chastised for being disrespectful to the man

who had allowed him to attend school at all, but all he got was a pondering stare.

“Was it as bad as you made it out to be?” Remus asked quietly. Harry almost mistook the gentle tones for pity instead of a direct command for an answer.

“Worse.” Harry willed Remus to believe him. Remus gave him one more firm stare before nodding. He stood and placed a comforting hand on Harry's shoulder as he looked on at the most respected wizard in all of Britain, if not the world.

“I’m sorry Headmaster, but as Harry's legal guardian I will not allow him to be taught by Professor Snape, and I must demand that Professor Snape not approach Harry in anyway to try to continue the lessons.”

Harry couldn’t help but gape slightly at his father’s friend. He knew Remus would take being his guardian seriously but Harry understood that like Hagrid, Dumbledore had literally been responsible for almost every good thing in Remus's life, a life debt beyond all others; and here Remus Lupin stood ordering the man around on Harry’s behalf.

A warm tingle wrapped itself around Harry's insides as he looked on his guardian, a man who embodied the title in every sense of the word.

Snape snorted mockingly. “Do not make me laugh Lupin, do you think you have any say in the matter” He seemed to ready himself for a cutting jibe, but Lupin did not falter in the presence of the mans gloating. He spared an irritated glance but turned to face Dumbledore who remained motionless and voiceless.

A contest of wills seemed to play out for all eternity and in mere seconds at the same time; before all at once, Dumbledore blinked.

“You are well within your right Remus to demand this.” Dumbledore acquiesced. Snape seemed to blink his surprise before crying out indignantly. “Headmaster, surely you can’t be...”

“Severus, that is enough” Dumbledore ordered abruptly. A stern look upon his face that mimicked Lupin moments before was directed at the potions master.

Snape seemed to redden and hesitate for a fraction of a second before nodding slightly, pivoting in a whirlwind of black robes, and striding ominously out the hospital wing.

‘Moony 1: Snape 0.’ Harry happily gloated to himself as he lay; an observer of recent events.

Silence took over the room which moments ago had been bustling with a silently battling contingent of adults.

Harry awkwardly sat himself up further giving himself something to do while everyone regained their bearings.

Dumbledore seemed to decide to be the one to break the silence as he removed his glasses cleaned them and placed them back on his own nose.

“My apologies Harry. I forget sometimes that you do have a voice in your own affairs. Remus should not have had to enforce it for you.” The man begged Harry for forgiveness.

Harry, earlier in his life might have been flabbergasted and humbled that Albus Dumbledore would lower himself to Harry's level and apologize like an equal. But he was older now and such motions were not as simple as face value would have him believe.

Nodding resolutely and leaning further into Remus' touch Harry righted himself so he was in as commanding a position he could take while lying in a hospital bed and focused on the man in half moon lenses.

“What happened?” He questioned.

Dumbledore seemed to think on his answer for a moment before answering. “I had actually hoped you could tell me. What is the last thing you remember?”

“You saying that the fault uncle Vernon got sick were yours and the death eaters.... Then everything is kind of hazy.” Harry admitted.

“Ah, well the hazy bit as you called it, is what concerns us. Your body in that moment in time, released impressive levels of magic that are well beyond accidental magic standards, and well maybe it would be better if I showed you.” Dumbledore said while motioning towards a large rounded bowl with shimmering silver liquid inside.

Thinking this one of the better ideas Harry quickly nodded.

Dumbledore slowly stood, and pulled the table housing the pensieve towards Remus and Harry. “I assume you would like to view the memory as well Remus.” Dumbledore questioned as he twirled a wand around his temple before proceeding to extracting the memory.

“I would Sir, thank you.”

Dumbledore chuckled, “None of that sir business Remus. How many times must I ask you call me Albus.” Dumbledore smiled at the man.

Harry was a little fascinated by the byplay, as moments earlier they were... enemies seemed to strong a word to describe them, but they certainly did not see eye to eye at that particular moment in time.

“Are you ready Harry?” Dumbledore’s voice drew Harry back to the matter at hand. Refocusing, Harry nodded followed Dumbledore’s lead as they entered the memory.

... ..

They were back in the headmaster’s office, the awkwardness palpable even now as they relived the memory. Dumbledore sat hunched slightly in his desk while the rest of the room seemed sober in their mourning for the dead of Surrey... Harry Potter, the memory, sat at the edge of his seat, a semi scared, agitated look marring his features.

“Considered him a threat... and what do you mean the nature of our...relationship.”

Harry watched his younger self in that moment in time realize what the headmaster meant. It surprised Harry that his facial features described so much as he watched the dawning horror plaster itself across the Boy-Who-Lived's face.

“I believe you understand Harry” Dumbledore stated sadly.

“He wanted me dead... so the wards helped try to kill him.” Harry said defeated.

Harry remembered what that tone of voice actually hid. Even now he felt the anger bubble within him.

“Now Harry, in no way was this your fault, nor was it your uncles. The blame lies solely on the shoulders of the death eater responsible for the potion, and on me.” Dumbledore firmly reminded Harry. A familiar speech in itself, as he directed it at the young man.

Harry watched his younger self sit quietly and contemplate recent events, Harry watched the sad sympathetic stares directed at him by his head of house and school nurse. It was upsetting to watch all the pity radiating off them.

Suddenly the world flickered, the picture of events gone past started to haze and turn gaseous.

Harry turned around on the spot and looked for the first time to his adult companions on this memory lane. They seemed just as surprised and if there wands pointed out in defensive stances were any indication... this was not supposed to happen.

Suddenly the world cleared and the gases refocused back into what was meant to be.

Slowly the wands of the two strong wizards lowered and both turned unreadable eyes towards Harry for a split second before indicating to Harry to watch.

Harry nodded a little reluctantly and turned just in time to hear...

Crack

What happened next was a display of the impossible.

The air seemed to fracture around Harry. Remus was tossed bodily away from the youth who sat in the cracking space. As if the very air were a glass object and it was shattering, pieces of the invisible substance fell away and dissolved into the ether. Dumbledore who had stood and raised his wand felt an unseen wind gush forward and push him away. The female members of the room just managing to stand by a joined effort in some form of shield charm that they had erected around themselves.

Dumbledore Managed to stand his ground long enough to cushion Remus fall and give him enough time to erect his own shield similar to that of the women.

Suddenly there was a blast wave emanating from the warped space around Harry. It flew forward decimating the grand table and wooden shelves around the room. The glass exploded inwards at the touch of the wave as if the room was a sudden vacuum.

"Mr. Potter... Focus.... Stop" Came his head of house's pleas. The women's words were drowned away by the wind and destruction. The warped space around Harry started to ripple though, as if agitated by McGonagale voice.

The shell of chaos that surrounded Harry seemed to reach a pitch that it liked as its surface rippled violently and the ground around Harry cracked away.

Dumbledore finally stood his ground in a pose indicating power as he waved his wand around himself sending spells splashing against what looked to be the support struts of the room.

"HARRY, STOP!" He boomed at the young man. Suddenly the cocoon dispersed outwards as if being torn asunder under the mans

words. Harry stiffened and looked up. His eyes glowing an unholy white. Then memory Harry's eyes blinked and they were back to their jade green. Then he fell unconscious.

Harry stared at the scene with wide eyes.

It took 3 more replays by the headmaster before Harry indicated that he was done. And they found themselves back in the hospital wing.

Harry stared wordlessly at his own hands as he wrung them mindlessly trying to process what had happened in the room.

"Harry?" a soft voice spoke at Harry's side.

"What was that?" Harry asked clearly bewildered.

"We are unsure. "The headmaster admitted with a frown. "I have a theory but even that is based on more circumstance than I am comfortable with."

Harry stared at the man, demanding he share his crackpot theory anyway. More than likely it would be true and it would explain the rest of Harry's no doubt completely unrealistic and improbable year to him.

It took a moment and another adjustment to the mans glasses before he started to share.

"Do you recall the incident this summer..."

"The dark magic that infected Surrey?" Harry questioned wondering how this had relevance to the situation.

"No, I am referring to the ritual magic's being channelled through your scar after you warned us about the dark magic." Dumbledore explained brushing past the previous topic.

Harry paused and let a fish like facial expression mar his face as Harry was starting to see where this was going.

“Oh” Harry voiced his comprehension. He didn’t really understand the mechanics of it but it was starting to make some kind of sense.

“Yes, I see we are thinking along the same lines. I told you and your healer at the citadel that the ritual magic’s had a effect on your magical channels. Specifically they striped you of some of your evolutionary blocks.” Dumbledore refreshed every one of past events.

“Wait... what does that mean. Evolutionary blocks... that sounds important.” Harry interrupted.

Dumbledore smiled faintly. “They can be. Ritual magic, in general is focused on imbuing the caster with different traits and characteristics the caster feels beneficial. It is like a prime ape artificially evolving itself from an ape to something akin to a human.”

Harry couldn’t keep the smile of his face. “So I’m what...? the next stage of evolution.” Harry had the wild idea of him reading minds and lighting flames with his mind... he couldn’t keep the eagerness off his face as he spotted a glass of water on the side table. Focusing his mind he willed the glass to himself... at least that’s what he tried to do.

“Harry? What are you staring at, are you thirsty?” Remus asked bemusedly on Harry's left.

Dumbledore hid his smile well as Harry blushed and took the glass Remus poured him.

Harry was fairly sure Dumbledore knew what he had been thinking. “It is too early to tell whether you are the ‘next stage of evolution’ or not, and really there are no set stages of evolution, you either gain abilities or characteristics that benefit you, or you do not.” The man said kindly. “The evolutionary blocks I referred to earlier are conceptual blocks that healers and magical researchers termed some characteristic signals we receive from the human body under various diagnostic scans.”

“You will learn such things later on and I believe Madame Pomfrey will be more than willing to inform you on the various theories revolving around the subject while she has her way with you.”

Dumbledore didn't even hide his smile under the groan Harry produced from the reminder of where he was.

"In any case, I believe the blocks removed from the ritual might have had to do with power regulation for your magical abilities. Your channels seem to be able to handle varying amounts and types of magic, that are not generally accessible to a wizard. Why they chose that moment to display that ability only you can answer." Dumbledore explained pointedly to Harry. Harry understood that that was all he was getting until he could elaborate on what was happening.

"I'm not to sure sir, I have some 'theory's' as well I guess" Harry said hesitantly. He wasn't sure why but he felt vary apprehensive about explaining what had been happening to him the past few days.

"By all means Harry...?" Dumbledore sat curious and waiting an explanation; even Remus who had been sitting at Harry's side turned slightly so he could watch Harry in his explanation.

Coloring slightly Harry told them everything. The strange reaction the room of requirement had been giving him, the sudden bursts of emotions and thoughts, the time he touched his back and images flew past his mind, everything he could not explain over the past few days.

"... and when I was in the memory, I don't know, I think the memory me was angry because I felt the pity of everyone in the room. And that was about the same time the memory went weird on us and it went all blurry, what was that anyway... and um ya, that's basically it." Harry finally finished his long explanation.

Scrounging up the courage Harry looked up from his hands and into the slightly wide eyes of Mooney and Dumbledore.

"Well, I had not been expecting that, I dare say you've added a few questions to my own." Dumbledore admitted with a frown.

"Harry why didn't you say anything?" Remus scolded as he systematically fussed over Harry, fluffing his pillow, remaking his blankets, filling another glass of water, and repeating.

"It never came up..." Harry said half heartedly as Remus put his glasses back on him after scrubbing at invisible smudges on it.

"Never came up he says... Half a mind to..." Remus muttered to himself as he took mothering to a level men were never meant to reach.

Harry accepted the mothering none the less as he was just glad no one was reprimanding him for destroying the mans office. Again...

"Where's Madame Pomfrey anyway... usually she would have ... headmaster, are you ok?" Harry questioned the man who had gone slightly pale at the matrons name.

"I am in trouble I believe." The man admitted as he got up from his chair.

"Harry, I will investigate the matter at hand and get back to you, if you could...." Here he magicked himself a piece of paper and quill and wrote a quick note.

"... give this to Madame Pomfrey it would be much appreciated." He quickly sealed the letter and handed it to Harry.

With out further ado he headed to the entrance of the hospital wing opened the door, stepped outside, grabbed the handle of the door with one hand and waved his wand at the door opposite him at the other end of the hospital wing. He quickly shut his own door and vanished into the school as a click resounded ominously and Madame Pomfrey's door opened.

"ALBUS DUMBLEDORE!" a ungodly screech of pure ire echoed out of the door.

Harry barely held in his own shudder of terror as a demonic version of the school nurse with frazzled hair and wand ready exited like a bat out of hell as she searched the room for the headmaster.

"Where is he?" She seethed as she turned to face Harry.

Harry could have sworn he eeped as he pointed to the exit.

“He told me to give you this...” Harry boldly answered as he held out the letter with trembling hands.

Madame Pomfrey grumbled and muttered curses and phrases that in Harry's opinion, innocent school children should never be exposed to as she took the letter from Harry. Harry gathered that Dumbledore had locked Madame Pomfrey within her own office so he could question Harry. Harry now understood why the man had fled as he did, as Madame Pomfrey turned dangerous eyes towards Remus and growled the word “out” at the man. The man was gone before Harry could even think the word coward.

What was to follow was to be a very angry school nurse with a very terrified patient.

Harry would feel violated for a very long time after she was done with him.

AN: See where I'm going with this now... do yea? Well if you don't get it now, I don't know what to tell you.

I've kinda strayed from my outline, so I've got some back tracking to do to get back on track to what I originally planned.

By this rate The original chapter 13, which I'm looking forward to actually writing, won't be written till chapter 23.

Anyone remember that story, I referenced earlier, cracked reservoir. I read through what I wrote and the story is becoming uncomfortably similar to it. That was not my intention but I promise when I finally reveal the whole truth of what has happened to Harry, it won't seem that way. I hope...

Well I atleast promise Harry won't be making any runic transportation devices, that's for sure. Although the concept is fairly cool...

Anyway... next chapter. Luna Luna Luna! Probably slightly fluffy, so be warned.

He took the opportunity that presented itself and grabbed his wand and ran for it. Unfortunately he was in a hospital gown, luckily he still had his underwear on, but unluckily, he could not figure out where the rest of his clothes were.

Running down the halls trying to elude students and teachers while displaying the back side of his dark grey boxers, Harry found himself smack dab in between a rock and a hard place.

“But Bradley is so cute, did you see those dimples, I almost died when he smiled at me.” A feminine voice giggled. A few other giggles seemed to follow the proclamation. Seeing as the voices were unfamiliar and Bradley didn’t sound like anyone in his year, he assumed that these were probably one of the younger years. Turning around trying to avoid the horde of girls in his state of undress he doubled back the way he came.

Turning a corner he dashed back until he spotted a group of shoulder high shadows approaching the corner.

“What do you mean he likes her, he so obviously still has a thing for Cho. I mean Cho’s a seeker, he’s a seeker, she dated Cedric, and he was a champion like Cedric... That loony girl, they have nothing in common, unlike Harry and Cho.” A nasally voice expunged.

“I’m just saying what I heard, and have you seen the way they are always so touchy feely together now...” another voice echoed. Harry recognized that voice as Lavenders. Taking the only other direction he could in this three way intersection of corridors, Harry ran the other corridor hopping to avoid the horde of women.

Harry believed he was home free... until he turned the corner and quickly ran back.

In the last corridor he had spotted the diminutive figure of the school nurse on a war path as she was clearly in search of Harry himself.

Harry was trapped. If he went down the first corridor, he would be spotted by possibly younger years and rumour would spread that he liked to flash the younger girls his backside, and then Madame

Pomfrey would get a hold of him after running into the same group, if he took the second route, he would run into lavender and a unknown girl who he suspected was one of Cho's friends and flash his backside at them, thus showing the biggest gossip and a mate of his ex, his humble posterior and Madame Pomfrey would no which way he ran by Lavenders squeals of joy from the gossip to be had, or Cho's friends remarks about Cho's taste in scrawny arsed pale skinned celebrities, and the third option was just to horrifying to contemplate.

Harry was trapped.

Spinning around in circles, Harry considered taking his chance with the first corridor before he spotted the most wondrous thing Hogwarts had ever held.

Making a mad dash Harry, ran directly to the centre of the intersection and his forth and hopefully best option. The Broom closet.

Tripping slightly on his robes Harry skid to the door and quickly opened and shut it with him inside. He felt handles and other objects, soft, hard, cold, warm, and any other form of sensation crash into his body, but he ignored them in favour of keeping his ears to the door and monitoring the traffic on the other side.

"I don't see it, Bradley's ok, but he's so immature." A female voice criticized

"He's eleven, what do you expect?" a voice reminded the other.

"Just because were first years doesn't mean we have to settle you know, you don't see me settling for just any wizard." A familiar voice complained cutely. Harry whispered his denial, not willing to believe that he had been lucky enough to avoid this first year.

"Whatever Creavey, like Potter would give you the time of day." A sardonic voice criticized.

"No!" Harry whispered to himself with wide eyes.

"No what?" a soft voice asked from somewhere bellow Harry's head.

Harry startled, slammed his head against the side of the small broom closet as he took in the fact that he was trapped in a broom closet with an unknown female voice with three other groups of females converging on his position outside.

While he was in boxers!

"Ow, you hit my necklace; do you know how many butter beers it cost to make this thing." A female voice groused.

"Luna?" Harry whispered. Surprised that of all the people to be stuck in a closet with, he had found...

"What are you doing in a broom closet?" 'Alone I hope...' Harry mentally added hoping there were no other people trapped in the surprisingly spacious closet.

"What are you doing in a broom closet?" Luna shot back.

Harry considered shooting back that he had asked her first when he heard from the outside...

"Did you hear that? I though I heard someone." Lavender browns voice queried from outside the door.

"That's ussmmf" Luna tried to identify but Harry had placed a hand over her mouth and whispered a quick "shhh!"

"There it is again... I know I heard it that time...." "Lavender complained suspiciously.

"I heard something too..." Pauline's voice echoed confusedly as she piped up anonymously from the outside.

"Quiet midget... the grown ups are talking here." the Cho supporter barked.

A muttering of “how rude”, and “lousy 6th years” resounded around the outside.

Then all went quite.

...

“Have any of you seen Harry Potter go this way.” An angry medi-witch demanded.

“No Madame Pomfrey” resounded outside, some slightly terrified by the angry tone. Harry was terrified and sweating if how wet his hand felt was any indication.

“No good gryffindors... always thinking they know better.” Madame Pomfrey mumbled to herself irately.

“Hey!” Lavender and Pauline Creavey groused in indignation.

“What are you still doing here.... You should be back in your common rooms by now, curfew started hours ago. Especially for you two.” Madame Pomfrey demanded.

“We got lost...” The other voice who had discussed Bradley’s dimples speed out in terror.

“Mrs. Brown, show them to their common rooms... where you should be as well.”

“Yes Madame Pomfrey...” Lavender squeaked.

Many soft pitter patters later and a few more minutes after a more angry stomping walked away mumbling about making her plastic gloves extra cold... Harry finally breathed a sigh of relief.

Feeling a tingling on the palm of his hand Harry looked down to find Luna’s head.

Releasing her and feeling a slick wet substance on the palm of his hand he looked at Luna questioningly.

“Did you lick my hand?” Harry asked in surprise.

“Did you cover my mouth with your hand?” Luna asked with a raised eyebrow in the almost pitch black broom closet. Grabbing a handful of Harry's hospital gown Luna wiped at her face to get the rest of her saliva off and proceeded to peek outside the broom closet.

Harry chose not to respond to Luna's rebuttal and peeked outside the broom closet himself.

The torches that gave off light in the corridor were starting to put themselves out indicating that it was well passed curfew, and lavender was lucky to not have had house points taken from her.

Stepping out into the empty corridor Harry took in what little of Luna he could from the moonlight.

Her hair was slightly more straggly than normal, presumably from the tussle Harry had caused inside the closet, her robes equally rumpled but overall, she looked her normal hyper alert, dreamy self.

“What were you doing in a closet?” Harry asked puzzled as he grabbed what little of his gown he could and secured his backside together.

Luna looked at Harry, and shrugged her shoulders indicating that she didn't have a reason.

“Well what are you doing out so late, you could get in trouble?” Harry asked after puzzling the mystery of Luna hiding out in broom closets.

“What are you doing out so late?” Luna asked back.

“Hiding from Pomfrey” Harry automatically answered with no shame whatsoever.

“Strange...” Luna commented, clearly puzzled by Harry's behaviour. She spun on her heels and stopped twirling as she faced the centre corridor adjacent to the broom closet and proceeded to skip down it.

After taking in the fact that Luna had called his actions strange, Harry decided to accompany the girl down the lonely, quickly dimming, hall.

"Luna.... Where are you going? The Ravenclaw common room is that way." Harry questioned as Luna took another turn that lead Harry to the lower levels of the castle.

"I don't know? Where are you going?" Luna questioned innocently.

"I was following you... aren't you heading to the common rooms?" Harry questioned.

"Nope."

"Then where?" Harry puzzled after the girl.

"Why do I have to be heading anywhere...?" Luna questioned back. She had stopped looking where she was going, instead she let her eyes close, slowed her bouncing to a trot as she walked on slowly.

Suddenly stopping, the girl tilted her head up and to the right slightly as if listening to something... then she twirled on the spot and came face to face with a curious Harry.

"Walk me outside?" she half asked, half stated.

Re-pivoting on her heels she started walking in the direction of the entrance doors.

Regaining his bearings Harry chased after the puzzling girl.

"Now... but its past curfew... 11, 11:30 at night" Harry reminded the girl.

"11:58 to be exact." Luna helpfully corrected.

"Exactly, aren't you worried about getting in trouble?" Harry asked curious with the aloofness of the girl.

“Why would I be... the worst they can do is assign me to a detention and take away house points.” Luna commented back as she turned around to face Harry. Looking him in the eye like she found a particularly interesting species of goldfish to study.

“And your not worried about that... won’t your house mates be angry with you for loosing them house points.” Harry asked curious with her answer.

“And if they are...?” Luna shot back.

“Well doesn’t that bother you? Having them upset with you.” Harry asked. Memories of being ostracized by his own house every time he lost points; vividly engrained in his memories.

“Why does it bother you?” Luna asked. Tilting her head in interest, she watched Harry as he comprehended her question.

“I...” Harry wasn’t entirely sure how to answer Luna’s simple question. It did bother him, it bothered him a lot, but the reason just seemed so obvious that he never questioned ‘why’.

Images of angry judgemental faces of his fellow students sped across his vision. Memories of fear and panic from his second year as he was rejected for his unique ability to converse with snakes, memories of jealousy from his forth as he was called a champion, memories of the loneliness.

“There’s your answer.” Luna announced to Harry's right.

Harry’s eyes widened slightly as he found himself outside by the lake, the rock where he had fallen asleep days earlier, feet away.

“What are we doing out here?” Harry asked the girl as she proceeded to brush leaves and dirt away from the ground.

“You said we could watch the sunrise together... We have time so we might as well make ourselves comfortable.” Luna answered back as she inspected her handiwork.

"Luna... the sunsets not for another... 5, 6 hours!" Harry reminded the girl.

"Well I'm not much of a morning person, so let's just stay awake instead of getting up early." Luna replied ignoring Harry's incredulous tone.

"But... I'm... Look at what I'm wearing... I have to go back to Gryffindor tower... get some other clothes on... get my invisibility cloak, the map. We can't just wait here all night

"Don't you have your wand?" Luna asked.

"Ya... but" Harry admitted, a little puzzled.

"Oh... I see, you have trouble in transfiguration." Luna said in comprehension as she looked at him sympathetically.

Feeling a little bothered that she thought he had trouble in the subject Harry quickly defended himself.

"I don't have trouble in Transfiguration... I got one of the top marks for my year in fact." Harry corrected the girl.

Luna then just looked at him with a quirked eye brow, as if to say "well...what are you waiting for?"

A memory of Hermione being reminded that she was a witch, caused Harry to blush and wave his wand about himself, transforming his gown, into a more respectable shirt and jogging pants.

They weren't anything spectacular, and Glad rags certainly wouldn't be selling a Potter line, but it suited his purposes as he lowered himself and sat next to the smiling witch.

Luna smiled once more before fully lying back and staring up at the sky.

Moments passed and Harry awkwardly tried to stay comfortable, but he felt slightly out of place. He couldn't figure how Luna could be so at ease.

Finally finding a positing lying at a 90 degree angle to Luna's head as he lay in a patch of grass, Harry finally looked at the sky.

"Huh..." Harry said in surprise.

"What?" Luna questioned serenely.

"Mars is bright... go figure." Harry said as he stared at the familiar light in the sky.

Moments passed before Luna giggled slightly. "You're strange Harry."

Harry couldn't help but grin at that, as coming from her, it sounded like a compliment.

Wondering whether he was supposed to strike up conversation or let the silence continue... Harry watched as some fairly thick clouds rolled across the sky.

"It looks like the clouds may make block the sun..." Harry said a little sadly as the idea of staying up to spot the sunrise had grown on him a little.

"Maybe... or it could make it better." Luna said vaguely.

Wondering what she meant Harry turned his head and opened his mouth to ask...

Pitter

Stopping and turning at the soft sound coming form the lake Harry saw small ripples spread across the surface.

Patter

This time he felt it as a particularly large rain drop splashed across his glasses.

“Perfect...” Luna said happily as she felt a sprinkle of water hit her face. Her eye’s closed in pleasure as she felt the liquid crawl across her cheek and drip off her ear.

“Luna its going to rain... we should go in side.” Harry said.

“Why?” she asked.

“It’s raining...” Harry said, as if it were obvious. As if to emphasize this ... the cloud suddenly started to release large torrents of water. The light drizzle they had felt earlier had suddenly become a heavy shower.

Through all this, Luna’s content smile grew wider.

“Relax Harry.” Luna calmly commanded. Taking her wand up lazily she mumbled something while waving it in Harry’s direction and he felt him self grow warm. Looking down at his hands, the rain barely seemed to make contact with his skin as it glided off him.

“Haven’t you ever just stood out in the rain before, or listened to the noise it makes as it hits the ground?” Luna asked in a tone that was dreamy and wistful.

Assuming that Luna had prevented him from getting sick by placing a warming charm and impervious on him. Harry thought on what Luna had said.

He had never really given it much thought as it were. He had always looked at rain as a negative. Something to bring a persons mood down. Clear skies and bright sunlight, that’s what he always pictured to be a good day.

“Just stop, close your eyes, and listen.” She suggested.

Not sure why, Harry heeded her command, and lay back, and closed his eyes.

'This is stupid...' his inner voice reprimanded him, making him feel like a fool to be following such an absurd girl. But another voice, the voice that sounded just like him, the strong voice that helped him overcome the imperious. It urged him to just try.

Wondering briefly why his mind was arguing with itself, he let himself relax and listened.

Pitter...

Patter...

Such a simple noise.

Pitter ...

Patter....

Although the impervious was keeping him dry, he could feel the rain drops hitting his body.

It felt... like music.

Each little hit followed by another and another... they soothed him. They formed their own chaotic rhythm and allowed Harry to relax even further.

"It's actually quite nice..." Harry admitted. As the first traces of a smile formed on his lips.

"Mmm hmm... My mum used to sit me on the terrace and we would fall asleep listening to the rain fall." Luna said fondly.

Harry's smile started to disappear as he contemplated what she had said. "Luna...?"

"Yes Harry..."

He felt like he should ask something... something profound. He felt like just maybe if he asked her this one question, she might be able to give him the answer.

"How... how did you get over your mother?"

Luna remained quiet for a few moments and Harry wasn't sure whether she had heard him, whether he had crossed a line in asking her such a question.

"I'm not sure." She finally answered, dashing away his earlier feeling like a broom sweeping away dirt.

"You're not sure?" Harry asked unsure how to interpret that.

"I can't just say that one morning I woke up and suddenly the world was wonderful again, but I wasn't as sad anymore." Luna answered in what sounded like a slightly puzzled voice.

"How did you get over your parents?" she asked back.

Harry wasn't prepared for her to turn his question back on him. He tried to open his mouth, maybe say something along the lines of I didn't, or I'm still grieving but instead answered...

"I never knew them. I don't think I had anything to get over."

Stopping to comprehend how callous that sounded, he wanted to further explain, to defend himself. He did feel sad for them, and he was always grateful that they had sacrificed their lives for him. But the truth was, they were strangers to him. He had always believed the sadness he felt for them was true grief but he realized once Cedric and Sirius had died. He had never truly felt grief. He had never had anyone but himself to grieve for.

"That's understandable." Luna finally answered back.

She didn't sound appalled or shocked at his answer. She didn't even sound like she pitied him, like his friends would if he were to ever reveal the same thing to them. She sounded ... accepting.

"Your right Harry, I shouldn't have dragged you out here." Luna finally said after a comfortable silence. She sounded resigned and a little embarrassed. Harry stopped to wonder why.

Flashing back quickly he recalled every word that escaped his mouth. They all sounded like he didn't want to be here... he didn't want to be here with her. His morbid question couldn't have really have helped any either. Harry felt ashamed now as he finally opened his eyes and looked towards the girl who was already sitting up with her back turned to him as she stared resignedly at the rippling lake.

She started to sit up but stopped as Harry's hand snaked out and held her wrists.

Looking at him questioningly, Harry quirked an eye at her.

"Luna..."

"Harry...?"

"... I'm trying to listen to the rain here." He sent her a warm, if not crooked smile, and pulled her back down to the ground.

He was pleased to see her frown turn back into grin.

..

For the next few hours, Luna and Harry lay back, and enjoyed each others silent company.

For brief moments their silence was interspersed with conversation, questioning each other of inane topics, like each others favourite class or most loathed candy.

It was pleasant, and the constant showers that had barely wet them, soothed them.

Unfortunately tranquility was never meant to last.

“Who’s there...? Show your self!” a gruff angry voice called.

Both of them bolted upright and turned to see a lantern making its way towards them. A hobbling Filch with an umbrella, as bent and crooked as they came, shielding him from the elements. Amber eyes watched them from the ajar entrance doors to the castle.

“Crap...”

Harry wasn’t sure whether it was him or Luna who had said it.

Jumping to her feet with speed he found admirable, she quickly waved Harry to get up.

“Come on Harry.” Luna coaxed as she held out a hand for him to get up with.

“Who are you? Don’t move!” filch commanded as he started to speed up towards them.

Harry didn’t need any further coaxing as he jumped to his feet and pulled Luna the other direction. Her heading away from filch, where as he decided to test how much of the marauders map he had remembered.

“Stop!” filch yelled as he outright ran trying to catch up to them. Unluckily for him he ran through a particularly slippery patch of grass. Harry and Luna smiled at each other as they heard him yelling and splattering himself in mud.

“That was close...” Luna sighed.

“What happened to ‘all they can do is give us detention and take away house points’?” Harry prodded with a grin.

Luna smiled back winningly “doesn’t mean we have to make it easy for them.”

Harry laughed as he led her inside.

“Stop... Show yourselves.” A familiar voice commanded from within the building.

“Oh Crap” this time Harry knew it was him who said it. As he pulled Luna the other direction, away from the potions master.

Remembering a passage way embedded within the courtyard he had always been curious about but never having the opportunity to explore, Harry weaved between columns and exterior corridors, as he led Luna from the north face of the castle to the west face near the green houses.

He could hear Filch finally catching up with them. Years of chasing down Fred and George having made him quite the runner. There was no sign of Snape but Harry was fairly sure he was trying to cut them off by running from within the castle.

Spotting the fountain that lay in the centre of the court yard, Harry slowed down to a slow jog and put a finger in front of his mouth. Luna just smiled back as if she were having the time of her life.

Hiding behind a wall near the entrance to the court yard, Harry peaked around the corner and to a quick glance.

As he had guessed; Harry could see the light of Snapes Lumos illuminating one side of the corridor inside. The man was obviously lying in wait, hoping to scare them to death when they tried to escape inside.

Looking at Luna and waving her to follow, Harry crouched low and ran as fast as he could to the fountain. Running his fingers along it, he walked the perimeter of the fountain until he found what he was looking for. The fountain was designed with a extra brick along one side of it. The square, clashing spectacularly with the round curves of the entire fountain. Grinning like a fool. He pulled out his wand and touched the side facing into the fountain and said “Dissendium.”

Immediately the water with in the fountain drained away, and the floor started to lower by segments. Finally what was left was a wet spiral staircase that led down into the earth.

Harry grinned smugly at Luna, as she quirked her eyes indicating that she was impressed.

“Stop you...” filch yelled as he finally made his way to the entrance of the courtyard. Thankful that it was still pitch black out. Harry and Luna dashed inside and stepped on to the surprisingly clean tile floor at the base. Immediately, the stairs rose up, to become the floor of the fountain once more. Stopping to listen, Luna and Harry waited with baited breath.

“Where are they, Filch!” an angry voice yelled in a whisper to filch.

“They were just here, they must have snuck inside.”

“Impossible, I was waiting, I would have seen them.” Snape scowled back.

“Then they must still be out here... probably some young couple trying to get frisky....” Filch said in disgust.

Harry avoided looking at Luna as he felt his cheeks flame, due to the tiny space they were in, they were fairly close as well, so that did not help his situation as he recalled Lavenders words from earlier.

“Well come on then... they can’t have gotten far.” Snape said archly as he commanded filch to catch the foul miscreants.

Harry and Luna waited with bated breath for a few more moments before sighing in relief.

Taking a step back Harry finally pulled out his wand and called forth a Lumos. The bright light shun with in the space. The ceiling dripping slightly and the walls covered in rolling etched curves that encircled the circumference.

“Where are we?” Luna asked as she walked around the foundations of the fountain. A large circular column supporting the weight of the fountain above.

"I'm not totally sure really. Remember the map I have?" Harry asked.

"Yea..." she replied distractedly as she continued to circle the walls running her hands across the intricately carved walls.

"Well I remember seeing there being a secret passage here, but I never actually took the time to have a look." Harry admitted. Finally Luna stopped running her fingers along the walls and turned back to Harry.

"Well shall we?" she asked.

Harry grinned, stepped aside and struck his wand hand inside the dark corridor.

A long corridor with stone floors and the same intricate carvings on the walls lead to a set of stairs at the end, maybe 12 or 15 meters away.

Walking down the corridor, they admired the artwork along the walls. It seemed funny that such intricate and clearly time consuming art would be hidden in such a secret place, instead of being showcased for all to see.

The lines and curves slowly started to form flowers and bushes, as they started to lead them to the stairs. A definite earthy smell permeated the air as they rose high and higher. Stopping at a landing that turned into a u turn, it took them in a path parallel to the corridor they just travelled, taking them further and further away from the fountain and subsequently the castle.

Grudgingly Harry voiced the responsible thing to do.

"Maybe we should head back..." he said. Thinking that he probably shouldn't lead Luna to an unknown location.

Luna stared at him incredulously. "What are you, Daft?" And continued to walk down the corridor with her own wand held high.

Harry couldn't help but grin as he caught up with her and they sped their pace up a little to the very end of the corridor. Another familiar circular column in a circular room with a segmented ceiling lay at the end.

"Dissendium" he called as he touched his wand to the ceiling where a square block hung extruded from the top. Immediately water funnelled down from the ceiling around the column and drained away through cracks in the floor.

The spiral staircase reappeared and they found themselves walking up into a herbologists dream.

From what they could tell they were in a green house, but none like the ones back at Hogwarts. This was enormous, the size of a regular house. Beautiful flowers lay along the walls over grown and wild, but still dazzling in the moonlight.

Stepping out of the fountain allowing it to finally close, and water shoot up, and quickly refill it they walked around it with their Lumos wands held high. None of the plant's seemed dangerous, in fact, the only plant that were within the glass structure, were flowers, bushes, one exceedingly large tree that the green house seemed to be built around with a man made exit surrounding the trunk of the tree, and what looked like a raspberry bush.

Waving his wand over it, with a quick diagnostic spell he had learned. It glowed a healthy yellow, and he pulled one off and offered it to Luna, as he grabbed another for himself.

"Harry... over here." Luna called excitedly.

Harry quickly grabbed another raspberry, and jogged over to Luna.

She had found herself on a balcony of sorts. They appeared to be somewhere east of Hogwarts, the tunnel having curved slightly. High up at the edge of a cliff where the mountains began. They certainly had not walked that far, but here they were.

But the balcony overlooked Hogwarts. But to say such a thing was like saying the Pacific Ocean was large. No words could truly express the sight they were privy. The rain clouds had followed them to the mountains, it being slightly colder, they received a mix of rain and snow. The soft tapping of rain hitting glass, resonated pleasantly in the green house behind them. There were still a few clouds scattered around Hogwarts but they were light and wispy. It was a quick rainfall, that was for sure. At the edge of their vision, the large lake that often Harry had mistaken for a sea stretched out to the horizon. The forbidden forest encircling the two.

Quickly checking his watch, Harry smiled and offered his wrist to Luna to see.

A smile graced her face as she excitedly went back in search of more raspberries.

Harry couldn't keep the wide grin off his face as Luna scurried about the garden. He busied himself with conjuring a, if he were to say so, very comfortable swinging bench. He decided to go all out, and conjured some cushioning to overlap the hard wooden structure.

Luna fluttered back, an excited mystique about her, nothing about her indicated dreaminess now. It was like watching a child getting ready to go to a park. Gathering all their toys to play with while wondering what new friend she might make today.

She had found a wooden basket, that Harry assumed had been for carrying over potted plants, and other garden things. Harry also assumed Luna had cleaned it before placing what appeared to be every berry on that little bush inside. Which turned out to be quite a few.

Luna quickly grabbed Harry's watch and pulled it to herself, clicking in impatience at the time indicated; she hauled the basket over and sat herself down on the swing Harry had created.

"Very nice" Luna complimented as she sank into the swing.

Harry bowed his head slightly in thanks and sat beside her.

Leaning back like Luna, Harry used his legs to kick off slightly and started the rocking motion. Luna, who was significantly shorter than Harry, having grown considerably during the summer and through out the school year, couldn't even reach the floor with her feet as she sat. Harry just liked that for some reason he could not and would not rationalize.

Feeling a tremor, Harry looked over at Luna and noticed she was shivering slightly, either that or twitching spasmodically from excitement. Not understanding why, or not willing to consciously acknowledge why he chose his next course of action; Harry took his wand and conjured large thick blanket over each of them, instead of renewing the warming charms, Luna had placed on them earlier.

Luna stayed silent for a few moments after Harry's gesture, and Harry wondered whether he had been too forward, but a slow shy smile crept its way across her face as she refused to look Harry in the eye.

Harry for the first time in forever, felt content. He sat staring out at the majestic scene of a fairytale castle by a lake, with soft taps of a dying shower tapping soothingly over the glass panes of a wild secret garden, side by side with a girl who he admitted, he might have liked more than a friend. Certainly more than Ron at least.

The world started to become slightly brighter over the next few minutes, a soft breeze blew across the tree tops of the forbidden forest, causing a fluttering of leaves and birds.

Almost able to countdown how long till the event with raspberries, they each ate one at almost scheduled order.

6 raspberries

The water took on a slight shimmer

4 raspberries

The world shifted to a almost daylight brightness

2 raspberries

A cloud finally cleared away from the heavenly seat of honour.

0 raspberries

An awkward silence

Still 0 raspberries

It finally happened.

The sky took on hues of orange and pink, the water glistened brightly, and Hogwarts castle shined an unearthly glow as the bright morning light hit the damp surface of the ancient castle.

A blinding light from the centre of their view above the surface of the lake brought the world alive with gentle brilliance. 'Luna was right; the clouds do make it better'

For the thin wisps and fluffy clouds surrounding the bright ball of flame, lit up spectacularly with yellows and reds, even the pink looked awe inspiring to Harry.

Not caring why he felt the need to do what he was about to do; Harry raised his left arm and placed it around Luna's shoulder. She leaned into his touch and rests her head on his shoulder, wrapping her arms around his torso in the process.

"Good morning Luna" He whispered to her. She squeezed him slightly and turned her head to look at his, with shiny grey eyes. The light giving them the same unearthly glow that Hogwarts enjoyed. A smile like no other graced her face.

"Morning Harry" She whispered back. And they both turned back to look on at the long nights wait.

The sun shining a new day for the pair.

... ..

After spending an unknown but significant amount of time in the Green house, the pair wordlessly got up, Luna still grasping the blanket Harry had created, and followed the tunnel back to the courtyard.

Splitting up briefly they made their ways to their common rooms, where they proceeded with their morning routines.

Students watched as Harry Potter sprinted across hallways and corridors to make it to the great hall.

Finally making it to the large wooden doors of the room, Harry peaked inside and saw to his delight, that Luna was still not there.

Waiting a few moments, Harry was rewarded with the sight of the familiar blonde witch.

"You ready?" He called as he approached her.

"Ready?" she asked in confusion.

With a grin he guided her to a spot near the doors near the corner of the hallway.

Walking backwards, Harry made his way to the corner and after a few moments jogged back and theatrically bumped into Luna.

"What a surprise to bump into you here." He cried with horribly acted shock.

Luna looked like she wanted to play along but all she could do was giggle and guide him back into the great hall. "You're a horrible actor, you know that right." Luna commented.

Harry huffed indignantly. "I don't know what you mean." He was betrayed by the corner of his mouth quirking slightly at Luna's continued laugh.

They both heard the gossip of their fellow students as Luna easily dragged him towards the Ravenclaw table today.

“Don’t they look chummy...”

“It’s been like this since the opening feast...”

“You don’t think... Potter, and Loony?!”

“Aww, look at that she’s holding his hand.”

They heard and they didn’t care, as they ate and chatted. It was left unsaid that the secret green house would lie theirs alone.

It was a fairly good morning for all of them, Snapes and Filches, suspicious glares only sent them into silent laughing fits, further incriminating them towards the two surly sleep deprived faculty members.

Nothing could interrupt their morning...

Well until Madame Pomfrey made an appearance.

“Potter!”

“Oh Crap...”

As Luna watched Harry being dragged away by an angry medi-witch, the only thing she could think to say was...

“Strange...”

AN: Alright this was a lot fluffy. No doubt about that. I hope I didn’t over do it with the descriptions and all.

I first thought, maybe they should end the long night lying on their backs but then I figured this whole experience was highly unusual, and Harry needs something to calm his normally hectic nerves down. I mean he’s just been told dozens of people died in a murder attempt on his life, he’s having a rough time forgiving Hermione, and as a

result isn't as chummy with Ron as usual. He deserves something to calm down.

Also I figure, Harry can't lie to himself anymore. He likes Luna, She clearly likes him, everyone knows, I don't want to drag it out. There not officially boyfriend and girlfriend yet... but this is a significant leap for them.

I'm borrowing slightly from a later scene in the story with the Luna-Harry'ness, but what the hey, why not.

I thought it was fairly important to have Harry have a conflicting opinion in his head. So many times in cannon and god knows how much in fanfiction, Harry's voice of reason, his conscience is Hermione. In my story, Hermione represents Harry's doubts so instead of being the voice of reason, she is that criticising voice in his head that tells him he's making a fool of himself, and to save face. It some times comes up with some good advice, but in general it's only there to vocalize Harry's doubts to him.

The other voice, The one that helps him defeat the imperious and sounds like him, well I figure, Harry is a pretty incredible guy in general, even if he doesn't think so, so he deserves a strong decisive voice that represents what he could be, that voice is the leader Harry, the strong wise person who one day Harry could become.

This chapter was hard to write at first, but after I got Harry to calm down, it was smooth sailing. I have an idea of what I want to write for next chapter but since I'm trying to get back to my outline, I won't give you a hint in case the chapter takes a different turn.

Chapter 13 – well ain't that interesting'

"Alright class. Settle down. I've got a special treat for you all today." The man said with giddy pleasure, clearly discernable through his thick accent.

Harry tried to hide the quiver of apprehension that shook his spine at his familiar words.

By the way some of the students took steps back, it was apparent that they recognized the same warning signs he had.

"Normally the ministry don't allow such fascinating creatures to be brought before students but with Professor Dumbledore's backing. I was able to get us all... an Occamy!" Hagrid exuberantly proclaimed.

'Oh... well that isn't so bad then...' Harry sighed in relief. He thought that Hagrid had convinced Dumbledore to bring back Norbert. He could handle a snake.

By the apprehensive looks of the class, Harry thought that maybe some of them didn't share his enthusiasm.

Correctly interpreting the faces of his students, Hagrid chuckled.

"No need to fret... Harry, if you'd be willing, I'd like you to be our interpreter. It's not everyday we got us a person who can speak parseltongue." Hagrid looked on hopefully.

Harry blushed at the attention, and frowned internally as Hagrid reminded everyone about what he could do. He nodded none the less, but hoped people had gotten used to that little tid bit by now.

Hagrid beamed.

"Well follow me, I've got him around back" Hagrid cried with glee. His excitement evident. He finally had the chance to communicate with one of his animals.

Harry could almost hear Hagrid wondering whether this snake would one day become a “pet”.

As Hagrid led the group with Harry reluctantly in the lead, he let his eyes wander briefly. Walking side by side, were Ron and Hermione.

Hermione was in her standard learning mode with a quill at the ready, wand by her side, and a determined face, declaring to the world that she was here to learn and nothing more. Ron, who was twirling his wand sedately, seemed more apathetic to his current situation.

But something about the two didn't sit well with Harry.

Hermione seemed a little less... confident? Maybe... less sure of herself? Harry couldn't place it, but she seemed to be lacking something that Harry had always attributed to her. He didn't really miss whatever was missing either, but the off putting air about her left Harry feeling wrong footed.

Ron was more of a mystery though. As he carelessly twirled his wand with some skill indicating he had done this more than once, Harry noticed that his distracted mask hid a deeply pensieve mind.

Harry hadn't really had long to talk with either over the last few days. The weekend had ended with its usual Sunday fanfare. Harry had been so preoccupied with his ever changing relationship with the young witch from the avian table, and his forced imprisonment in the hospital wing (longer than Harry thought even Pomfrey could justify), he had ignored his friends completely. He felt guilty and didn't try and deny that he was at fault partially, but he wondered what consequences were to be had because of it.

“Oh a fat one... come close dear, wiggle your jiggles my pretty, don't be shhhy.” Harry heard cooed from somewhere to his far he saw a large cage made from steel tethers.

“He seems ta like you Ms. Crombay.” Hagrid smiled happily to a chubby Ravenclaw.

“That’s right dear, I simply adore you, so why don’t you take a stroll on over and let me give you a hug.” A hiss echoed from the ceiling of the box.

There hanging by its tail and two hind legs was what Harry would have called a winged lizard. The soft white wings were retracted, but clearly large as they hung from a silvery green snake. Its head angular as it glared hungrily at Harry’s classmate. Two hind legs acting more like talons as they gripped the tether bars.

The Slytherin’s who were in the class, thankfully without Malfoy, looked at the creature in interest, probably considering this one of their better care of magical creatures classes.

The 6th and 7th years were sometimes mingled together with all there year mates. If it could be helped, they would try to keep a House pair together exclusively, but more often than not, there were 3 if not all 4 representative Houses per subject.

“Oh he’s talking... Harry, did you catch what he was saying.” Hagrid enthusiastically demanded.

“Err...” Harry succinctly answered as he focused on the now rapidly hissing snake. What was he to tell Hagrid, who looked as excited as he did when he had watched Norbert hatch. Harry didn’t think telling everyone that the snake fancied nibbling on the chubby students was a good way to start out a year.

“What’s the oaf talking about, how would any of them know what I’m talking about.” The snake muttered to himself, incredulous of the half giant.

“Hi” Harry said lamely in parseltongue. Some of the students winced and gave him shifty eyed stares as he spoke the language of the serpent.

The snake stopped its mutterings and looked up at Harry. As the snake had few if any facial muscles, Harry could not discern its emotions, but by the rapidly blinking eyes and uncoiling of its exceedingly long tail, Harry assumed that it was surprised.

“Speak, ugly one.” The snake commanded. Harry decided, he was allowed to take offence to that.

“Ugly... look who’s talking scale face.” Harry retorted in retaliation.

“How dare you, do you know ‘any’ manners you mongrel. Respect your betters... or face punishment for your folly.” The snake hissed imperiously.

Harry admitted that he was impressed that the snake even knew the word folly, and also that there was a word in parseltongue that represented it. But its vocabulary did not help it make Harry like it any more.

He fully uncoiled from the ceiling and unfurled his wings to flap itself into a slow hovering descent.

Harry thought the snake a little too pompous for its own good, as Harry understood this minor act as posturing “What are you going to do... huh? Bite me?” Harry mocked. He got the impression that if a snake could blush this one would have.

“You’ll taste my venom you suicidal monkey.” The snake hissed in anger.

“I’ve been bitten by deadlier and larger snakes than you. I’d like to see you try.” Harry scoffed at the angrily hissing serpent.

“Come here and say that...” the snake jeered as it slithered to the end of the cage sticking its head out of the tether bars but not managing to fully exit due to his wings.

Harry was about to take a step forward but then realized he was arguing with a snake.

Turning around he noticed the curious faces of the students. Hagrid was near convulsions with excitement to learn what the conversation had been about.

"Well Harry, what he say?" Hagrid asked expectantly.

"Tell him I said I would eat his eyes from there very socket and pump each and ever yone of you apes with my venom until your veins become bloated and burst, you filthy little creature." The snake suggested tauntingly.

Glaring at the snake, Harry put on a mischievous smile.

"Oh he's telling me that he really appreciates the cage you built him Hagrid. He was terribly afraid a bird would get him."

"That's not what I said human... The truth... I want their flesh to fill my belly!" The snake hissed in rage.

"But he is feeling a little sad today, apparently, he misses his mum, he was the runt of the litter and everyone picked on him you see ..." Harry said sympathetically. He could see Hagrid wanting to burst, ready to mother the vile little reptile already.

"You will pay human... mark my words, I will be free and when I am, I will crawl down your throat and eat you from the inside out!" The snake hissed loudly.

Thinking he should give some warning to Hagrid..." Oh but he doesn't like to be touched... so no one should actually go near him. But he loves to have people to talk to. He can understand you all even if you can't understand him."

The snake hissed things that even his parseltongue could not translate, and Harry assumed they were unpleasant to hear. The serpent version of Malfoy seemed apoplectic with rage.

"Of course... he didn't seem to like it when people were placing him in the cage. I thought it was because he didn't like being confined but, he's just afraid to be touched" Hagrid whispered to himself in comprehension.

"Harry what's his name?" Hagrid demanded.

"Your vile lips are unworthy of my name. I will escape your prison, and seek you all in your sleep." The snake yelled.

"Shirley! He said he heard a human being called that; he thought it was a great name." Harry cried out almost in laughter at the clear shock the snake portrayed as he named it.

Hagrid beamed and a couple of the students giggled at the name.

"Class, lets make 'Shirley' feel welcome. Say hello" Hagrid commanded as if he were introducing the class to a new student.

"Hello Shirley." The class called back.

Harry had a hard time keeping a straight face for the rest of the class.

... ..

After the class, Harry had eventually worked up the courage to admit to Hagrid that he had lied, but not to what extent. He explained that the snake was far too angry to be around students. Hagrid was visibly disappointed but accepted the fact. Harry assumed that Hagrid thought he was trying to save him any embarrassment. Even though that was true, Harry didn't feel it necessary to enlighten his friend to how much he enjoyed 'translating' for the creature.

"Next snake you get, run him by me and I'll let you know. We may find one you'll like." Harry offered.

Hagrid visibly brightened at the offer and shooed Harry away to lunch as he dreamt of what could be.

... ..

Being a Wednesday, Ron had a free period after lunch. Harry thought now a good time to make up for a near week of ignoring his friend.

"Ron, wait up." Harry called, as he caught up to his room mate.

“Hey Harry.” Ron said in greeting, forgetting his own pensieve behaviour.

“Sorry I’ve been ignoring you for a while there mate. Don’t know what got into me.” Harry said, deciding it would be better to get to the point of it all.

“Huh?” Ron said as he turned his head to stare at Harry in confusion.

“I haven’t been around in a while, always off doing my own thing, I don’t remember the last time we talked or you sulked about the Cannons...” Harry said with a half sad smile.

“Their just having a bad year is all!” Ron exclaimed quickly, ignoring the rest of what Harry said.

Harry laughed. “It’s been a very long year then.” Harry teased with a more heartened smile as Ron went on to defend his favourite team.

Leading Ron down to the kitchens instead of the great hall, Harry spotted a familiar corridor.

“... that’s why, the Tornadoes were always a no good stinking team filled with Slytherin cheaters, they probably cursed the team.” Ron explained pointedly, using his favourite explanation for why the Cannons were playing shoddily.

“Ya...sure... but Ron, what you reckons down there.” Harry asked as he pointed at the dark corridor.

Stopping from filling Harry in on more cannon propaganda, Ron let his eyes follow Harry's finger.

“Down where?” Ron asked. As he stared at the indicated spot Harry was pointing.

“The corridor right opposite the kitchens.” Harry said wondering whether his friend had been confounded.

“Harry, there’s no corridor there...” Ron said warily. Walking towards where Harry had indicated, he put his hand at the entrance and leaned against it.

Harry gaped as Ron let the non existent wall support him.

“That’s not possible” Harry said startled as he stood next to his friend and stuck his arm into the corridor.

Ron leapt back startled. “How the hell did you do that?” He asked shocked as he looked at his friend in wonder.

Pulling his arm out to show to Ron, “There’s a corridor here, but for some reason only I can see it, or go through it.” Harry explained his confused theory.

Deciding to freak out his friend a little he stepped into the corridor completely.

“Bah! Harry, get out of the wall now!” Ron demanded as he poked and prodded the wall with his finger trying to force his way in; finally ending up rapping his knuckles against the wall in frustration, as if knocking on a door.

Harry smiled, waiting till Ron took one final step closer; Harry stuck his arms out of the corridor and grabbed Ron, pulling him into the wall.

Ron wailed in terror as he was sucked into a wall to face a deeply amused Harry Potter.

“You prat! Don’t do that.” Ron yelled in frustration as Harry grinned mischievously.

“How did you know you could pull me in? I couldn’t push through on my own.” Ron finally asked after calming down significantly.

“Oh I didn’t, but I took a guess.” Harry said with a smile imagining Ron smacking into the wall in an alternate failed attempt at entry.

Ron seemed to be thinking the same thing as he mumbled about inconsiderate prats.

“Come on, let’s explore a bit, we got most of the afternoon off today.” Harry coaxed as he lit his wand, and took a step down into the dark floor below the stairs.

Letting some excitement sparkle in his eyes at a little sleuthing, Ron eagerly caught up to Harry, and followed his lead.

“How did you find this place?” Ron asked as he looked on the corridor in interest.

“I got lost and found myself here.” Harry said distractedly. He was contemplating the lack of presence in the corridor. Most times, the hall felt, dark and ominous, now it just felt empty. He puzzled over the lack of wind as well; there was no resistance what so ever.

Finding their way back to the five way stop, Harry tried to get his bearings.

“Alright, this corridor should lead to a dead end. Don’t know why it even exists if it doesn’t go anywhere, and this one is where we came from. So we got three options. Where to first?” Harry asked as he did as Luna had and marked the indicated corridors with flaming letters.

Ron deciding to do this the mature way, recited a lyric oddly similar to Eaney Meany Miney Mo, and chose the corridor directly to the left of there exit.

“You don’t happen to have the map on you do you.” Ron asked hopefully.

Smacking his head, Harry quickly took off his back pack and searched it for the familiar piece of parchment. Having been with out it so many times this week, Harry had decided to take it with him.

“Nice” Ron complimented.

“I solemnly swear I am up to no good” Harry declared.

Watching the spidery webs of ink spread out Harry immediately went to where the kitchens were labelled.

"It's not listed" Harry said in disappointed surprise.

"But... were still on the map though?" Ron pointed out as he saw two dots labelled Harry Potter and Ronald Weasley. They were on a blank section of the map for the floor they were on.

Taking a few steps forward, the two dots moved. The map blinked out and then back and Harry saw to his amazement...two horizontal lines come to existence

"The map just drew part of the corridor." Harry said in surprise. For sure enough, looking to where they had started, to the few feet of where they were now, two stretches of wall ran parallel to them on the map.

"This must be how they mapped the place." Ron said impressed.

The duo quickly started walking at a faster pace and watched as the map updated itself to fill in a new hidden destination in the castle, blinking with each step they took.

Finally they reached a blank stretch of wall and looked down into the map.

"That isn't right...?" Ron said in confusion.

The wall on the map showed a doorway a few feet ahead of them. As the map was updating by taking in a radius of 6-8 feet away from itself. Ron walking towards where the map indicated there to be a door. Placed his hand on the blank wall, and blinked in surprise as a gilded gold handle appeared.

Immediately wall sconces appeared out of no where all along the dark corridor they had just traversed, and lit themselves as the wall before them vanished to be replaced by a more opulent wooden door that took up the entire fake wall.

“Whoa...” they both said in awed shock at the surprising behaviour of the corridor.

Harry wondered why it had reacted to Ron’s touch like it had. If the first corridor that ended in a wall had the same hidden door, why had it not done the same when he had touched it?

Sharing a brief moment where the two communicated with their eyes they came to the agreement to push on.

Ron and Harry with wands out each grabbed a door and pulled. Harry’s door stayed shut but Ron’s opened without so much as a creak.

Sharing a confused look Ron attempted to pry open the same door. It creaked open freely.

Looking at each other puzzled Ron grasped both handles while Harry raised his wand higher in a more defensive stance.

Ron quickly swung both doors open and pointed his wand inside the room. Harry following suit as they stood side by side.

In a way the room was like an extension of the hall. Made entirely from large stone, the room had five additions. On every wall, including the ceiling and floor except the entrance, large concave discs made from what looked like a metallic crystal, were affixed.

The room seemed to hum at their entrance.

Ron froze.

Eyes wide he took in the details of the room and raised his hand and started counting off the hums. When he pulled away his thumb, the hum took on a more urgent pitch.

Ron’s eyes widened in panic and he grabbed Harry’s arm and dragged him away from the room at a run.

“Ron ...Ron what are you doing? What’s the ...”

“Run!” Ron cried in desperation as he sped to the five way intersection. Running down the indicated exit Harry had marked, he stopped and headed back, all the while cursing in irritation.

“Ron what are you...?”

“Get rid of the markings now!” Ron cried in desperation as he swung his wand back and forth as if swatting at a fly or orchestrating a particularly violent violin solo.

Not questioning his friend especially when three of the five corridors started to brighten up with red light. Harry quickly vanished the writing and followed Ron as he desperately ran down the only dim corridor.

“What’s going on Ron...?” Harry demanded as the corridor seemed to tremble and Harry noticed a faint red light forming behind and in front of them at either end of the corridor.

“You ... found...There’s a ... Node!” Ron cried desperately; heavily winded.

Harry had no idea what those were, but by Ron’s clear desperation to get away from the red light, Harry, using his well trained legs, sped up while dragging a slowing Ron, faster away down the vibrating corridor.

Quickly spotting the exit as the corridor was all but glowing from both red pricks of light that shone a bright, blood red. Harry put on a final burst of speed.

The corridor stopped its hum.... and then the entire hallway shook as if under a terrible earthquake. Both ends of the corridor shone brightly and Harry could feel the lights approach.

Quickly pivoting Harry and Ron dived into the stairway, and up 5 or 6 steps clearing them from the lower corridor, before a loud whooshing noise announced the joining of the two light sources.

A giant stream of light the size of Harry's torso struck dead centre and half blinded Harry as he averted his eyes.

They remained silent as they watched torrents of energy speed back and forth in a chaotic battle of violence and beauty. The silence that the event had inspired was suddenly broken by laughter.

“Ha...” Ron cried in hysterics, as he broke down and laughed; feet from the magical beam of energy.

“Ron...?” Harry asked in concern.

“Fred and George will be so jealous.” He cried in hysterics as he wiped tears from his eyes.

Harry let the corners of his mouth quirk slightly in humour as he took in the situation. It wasn't truly funny, but something about surviving this danger, and having the adrenalin pumping caused Harry to chuckle as well.

The two friends let there laughter run its course before Harry finally asked the question that had plagued his mind.

“What just happened?”

“Oh we almost were vaporized, that's what happened. Everywhere you go Harry...” Ron said with a fond smile.

“Vaporized...huh.” Harry said as he contemplated Ron's words. “...and if we hadn't have vanished my writing?” He asked.

“The corridor and maybe part of Hogwarts may have exploded killing us all.” Ron said dryly.

“Huh...” Harry said in a slightly higher pitch as he contemplated what could have been.

“Butterbear?” Harry asked.

“Read my mind.” Ron said. As they exited the corridor, and made their way towards the kitchens.

They stopped however when they came face to face with an un-amused headmaster.

“I believe we should hold off on the butterbears for now.” He said in dry disapproval with a hint of his twinkle peaking through.

... ..

“So...” Dumbledore said by way of a conversation starter.

“Sir.” Ron and Harry said back.

“I believe I overheard Mr. Weasley explaining to you what could have happened.” Dumbledore explained.

“Yes sir” Ron and Harry agreed.

“Now do you both believe this merits punishment, this being the near destruction of Hogwarts situation that it is.” Dumbledore asked.

“Yes sir.” They both repeated in slightly nervous tones.

“Well then... Mr Weasley. For preventing the school from being destroyed. I award you two hundred points. Mr. Potter, for almost destroying the school, I deduct two hundred points.” He said with a smile.

“I will forgo assigning you both detentions for this afternoon’s behaviour seeing as you had no way of knowing where you were going.” He smiled.

Both relaxed at Dumbledore’s white washing of the situation. “Thank you sir.”

“But I believe we shall have to keep this little incident a secret. As I’m sure you both know, your head of house and professor Snape may be highly critical of your punishment, not even mentioning your

mother.” Dumbledore smiled as Ron blanched at the prospect of what his mum would have done to him.

“But I have to ask... how did you get inside the node in the first place?” Dumbledore leaned forward, highly interested by the answer.

Ron and Harry exchanged glances, and Harry sat up straighter as he answered.

“I found the corridor a week ago and I was the only one who could see it so I took Ron down into it.” Harry admitted.

“You saw the entrance?” He asked with a raised eyebrow.

“Yes sir.” Harry answered.

“Were you the one that opened the door to one of the focusing chambers or was it Mr. Weasley?” He asked

“I did sir. They wouldn’t open for Harry.” Ron spoke up.

“Ah well that is a relief at least.”

“Sir...?” Harry asked in confusion.

“The nodes Hogwarts draws its power from are some of the strongest recorded on the planet. When Salazar Slytherin was expelled from this school a millennia ago, the remaining founders deemed it a risk to allow him access. They developed a way to barricade certain high security areas in the school against Parselmouths, as at the time the gift was still exceedingly rare, as it is now. If Voldemort were to ever get a hold of these nodes, I shudder to think what he could do with them.” Dumbledore explained.

Harry was very confused. What the hell were nodes, he remembered Dumbledore mentioning them once, but he never guessed the importance and power they wielded.

“I was actually coming to see you before I felt the node activate. It was not supposed to start one of its cycles for another month.” Dumbledore explained.

Harry looked at the man expectantly wondering what he wanted to talk to him about.

Dumbledore appeared to try to open his mouth but stopped and ever so slightly flashed his eyes in Ron’s direction; Harry got the impression that he was asking permission to say something in front of him. Hoping that that something didn’t have to do with the prophecy Harry nodded his head.

“After last week’s incident in my office, I went through your medical history; I have a working understanding of medi-wizardry, so I was able to deduce a few things.” Dumbledore explained. Ron quirked his eye at Harry at the mention of an incident but said nothing as he listened.

“To be honest Harry, I believe that the ritual may have had a far more reaching effect on you than it would on others. You and another have significantly different cortical levels than the average wizard. Serotonin and other neuro chemicals were present in areas of your brain at levels that the average witches and wizards have never before recorded to have had.” Dumbledore announced authoritatively.

Most of what Dumbledore said went over his head, but he at least got his reference to ‘another’; being the other prophesised child of course.

“And this means?” Harry asked in confusion.

“I’m not sure. When these levels were first recorded after Voldemort had attacked you, I had believed they were in response to the killing curse, but further research indicates that levels of your brain have been stimulated that we know next to nothing about, areas that remain stimulated rather than return to normal as I and the medical team had expected.”

At Harry’s slight frown from being told another reason why he stood out from the crowd, Dumbledore commented with a slight smile. “I’m

sorry to say, but it appears you were never intended to have a normal life, Harry.”

“Is Harry going to be alright... with these newrey chemicals in his brain?” Ron asked with some worry. Harry was touched with his concern and impressed with his forethought, but troubled by the point he had brought up. Was he going insane slowly, were these abnormal levels of chemicals in his brain, leading him to an early grave?

“Not to worry Mr. Weasley, as far as we can tell they are not causing Harry any ill effects.” Dumbledore smiled down at his student, with a little pride shining through, clearly pleased with the concern and loyalty displayed.

“Unfortunately, with this new information and the fact that you were introduced to ritual magic with an unknown intent... we have no idea what possible effect they may have on ... Mr. Weasley?”

Ron starred wide eyed at Harry. “How did you get exposed to ritual magic?” Ron asked in shock.

“I told you...” Harry said in confusion.

“Oh no you didn’t. I definitely would have remembered that!” Ron retorted.

“Sure I did... I know I ... I think I did?” Harry said searching his memory for the conversation.

“Huh... I guess I forgot.” Harry admitted.

“You forgot!” Ron demanded as if Harry were daft.

“Yes well... Maybe I could fill you in. Mr Potter had been understandably distracted at the time.”

Dumbledore proceeded to give Ron a thankfully, highly abbreviated version of events.

“Due to this ritual, we believe Harry has been experiencing unconfirmed abilities.” Dumbledore finished.

“Abilities?” Ron accused.

“Hey no fair, I just realized myself.” Harry defended himself.

Ron reluctantly let it drop.

“I was looking for you Mr. Potter because I have been reviewing memories with you in them for the last week trying to see if there have been other emergencies of these powers. I believe I have found just that.”

Pointing at the familiar bowl, Harry stood and at Dumbledore’s “Will you be joining us Mr. Weasley?” Ron soon followed into Dumbledore’s memories.

They stood in a dark room with a dozen voices whispering excitedly.

“He’ll be here soon, quiet...” an excited Nymphadora Tonks whispered a foot away from memory Dumbledore.

Suddenly a dual pop occurred followed by Harry’s voice shooting spells at the group.

Harry realized that he was reliving his birthday party. “Sir what am I looking for” Harry asked.

“You are seeing it my boy. You are performing this ability as we speak.” Dumbledore explained as Harry tried to see what he was doing that had set Dumbledore off.

The world suddenly paused as Harry shot a stupefy, the red beam and everyone in the room paused as well as Dumbledore walked forward.

“A little test, tell me Harry what is wrong with this picture?” Dumbledore asked as he allowed Harry an uninterrupted view of the scene.

'This must be how he likes to teach' Harry thought as he tried to spot the odd thing out.

Walking up close and frowning as he could barely make out his own face in the unlit room he tried to spot any kind of oddity.

After circling himself five or 6 times. Harry was starting to get frustrated.

'I'm just casting a stupefy... there's nothing...' Harry let his eyes glide along his outstretched arm and paused at the origin of the beam.

"Where's my wand?" Harry asked aloud.

"What?" Ron asked in shock as he finally spotted the inconsistency.

"Very good Harry. Yes, you are displaying a unnatural amount of control for someone with out a wand." Dumbledore praised. Harry watched as the memory unpaused and then the fight continued. Harry and Ron trained there eyes to follow Harry's hand as it shot energy out of the tip of his thumb and index finger as he aimed his hand as if wielding the non existent wand.

Finally exiting the memory, Harry fixed Dumbledore with a confused expression. "I can do wandless magic?" He asked.

"You can, as can most wizards and witches. But to do so can be deadly."

"What about accidental magic... or apperating, or parseltongue, or all the other things wizards can do with out a wand. Isn't that magic?" Harry asked trying to refute the development.

"Unfocused... different variety, and levels of power used." Dumbledore answered respectively.

"I will not bore you with the details but in essence, witches and wizards are not the epitome of magic others would have you believe.

Unlike true magical creatures, our bodies can not focus and perform feats of magic without external tools.”

“So what are we then?” Ron asked confused. He had probably heard the argument before in his life, but to be faced with the reality of the situation, had clearly shaken him.

“Witches and wizards... strictly speaking in magical ability, we are no more powerful than a diricraw or phoenix. We are able to perform certain feats of magic, but without the right tools at our command, other activities are beyond our reach.”

“Is there a creature ahead of us on this ‘list’?” Harry asked. This was actually quite interesting. He wondered if his Guide talked about things like this.

“Well again, this must be kept in perspective, but strictly speaking in terms of magical ability. House elves, merfolk, and to an extent veela.” Dumbledore explained.

“Hermione will love that...” Ron mumbled to himself.

“Wait what about the goblins... they’re pretty prominent, aren’t they ahead of us?” Harry asked. They always looked down upon Harry, people spoke about them with nervousness at times. They had fought magical wars against wizards. They must have wielded incredible power.

“Actually that is a common misconception that people make, further propagated by the goblins strict confidentiality. The Goblin race as a whole, are muggles.” Dumbledore explained to the shocked pair.

“Muggles are in charge of the wizarding world’s gold...” Ron asked flabbergasted.

“We have gotten side tracked... Harry I’d like to run an experiment if you will.” Dumbledore stated, brushing aside the earlier topic.

Holding out his hand and looking at Harry’s wand, Harry quickly obliged and handed him his eleven inch holy friend.

"Mr. Weasley, if you would step behind me." Dumbledore asked. Ron quickly followed his instructions.

Dumbledore waved his wand at a near by cupboard and a glass sphere similar to the one he had been instructed to 'fill' in his training sessions appeared, although it had an additional silver ring wrapped along its surface.

"This is a trapper. It will capture any spell and keep it in stasis for further study. The silver band allows us to study any anomalies that the trapper may detect." Dumbledore explained as he conjured a podium and physically placed the sphere on top where a circular indent let it rest steadily.

"Harry, I'd like you to try and cast a wingardium leviosa on the orb." Dumbledore explained.

Feeling slightly self conscious, Harry nodded and turned to face his glass opponent.

Raising his hand in a similar position as he had in the memory, Harry intoned...

"Wingardium Leviosa" He even swished and flicked. But the ball lay motionless.

"Maybe it was a one time thing sir." Harry said in slight disappointment.

"That is a possibility, but it is also possible that you did not believe you could perform the spell." Dumbledore explained with a raised eyebrow.

"Sir?" Harry asked. He had cast that spell on many an occasion. He was fairly sure he could do the spell.

"I'm sure you know how to perform the spell, but I do not believe you believe you can do it, with out a wand." Dumbledore explained kindly.

“Believe you will cast the spell, if it helps, imagine you are holding your wand, and cast.” Dumbledore instructed.

Frowning in slight frustration with the man... ‘Oh ya. Let’s get the 6th year to perform magic that should be impossible. If he fails he just doesn’t have enough faith to pull it off’ he cynically scoffed to himself.

Resigning himself to trying anyway. He took a breath and focused on the globe... studying it and the room. Trying to imagine his magic waiting to release itself from his hand in waves of power.

For the second time in a week a voice in his mind piped up. ‘I didn’t have to do this in the citadel... I just did it. There’s no need to do any of this focusing stuff... I just have to... do it.’ His mind spoke. Feeling a slight wave of confidence at his mental command, Harry pointed his hand at the ball...

“Wingardium Leviosa!”

The ball filled with a bright light as the silver band spun around the surface.

“Well done Harry.” Dumbledore congratulated.

Harry just stared at the ball with wide eyes, not believing it had been that easy. His hand didn’t even feel any different from the contact of the magic.

Harry didn’t realize Dumbledore was scanning him until his wand flashed across his peripheral.

“One moment Harry, I must check to make sure your magic is not becoming toxic after performing this feat.” Dumbledore explained as his wand arm glowed a slight yellow, and then varying other parts of his body glowed the same way.

“Curious...” Dumbledore commented thoughtfully to himself. As he let his wand drop to his side.

“What’s curious sir?” Ron asked as he was still staring at his friend in shock.

“There is a large concentration of magic coalescing behind your lungs and along your spinal chord. They pose no threat, but I have never seen such a thing. I can not fathom what its purpose is.” Dumbledore said, with a gleam in his eye that Harry recognized in Hermione and Madame Pomfrey. It was the look of someone waiting to sink their teeth into something, whether it be a book, patient, or unwitting abomination of magic.

“We should investigate this matter further Harry, but for now...” he handed Harry back his wand... “It would be better if you refrained from mentioning or practicing your ability with out my presence.” Harry did not mistake it for a request as so much as an order.

Harry could see the logic in it, but felt a little offended that Dumbledore thought he would not use discretion.

“Now I believe you two will be late for transfiguration if you do not hurry...” Dumbledore said by way of dismissal.

Ron’s stomach grumbled in protest.

The headmaster had punished him after all.

... ..

Harry returned to his bunk feeling drained. After finally finishing transfiguration, Harry had to speedily study for potions and create the potion indicated for the next class. It was slightly worse than his usual standards as he rushed, but it was still passable.

He pulled out his runes book and started to study, after asking the room to clean up his work station. He had been having trouble the last few days in his studies for the subject.

The notes indicated that he had to have a firm understanding of the all the runes studied so far before he was to move on. That meant memorization. He had memorized quite a few, but his mind seemed

to halt and he was having a hard time concentrating on his work. The simple truth of it was, Harry was more interested in creating a magical object with the runes than learning there language. Something, he needed to know when he went to write his O.W.L and N.E.W.T. for the subject.

Setting the book aside in frustration Harry had packed his things and made his way up to his dorms.

... ..

Setting his bag down, and checking his watch to see he had another 2 hours before he had to be in the great hall for his training; Harry lay back on his bed and stared at the ceiling.

The door to his room opened and Ron entered twirling his wand in familiar motions as he walked mindlessly over to his bed and copied Harry's motions.

"Ron...?" Harry asked in concern.

Quickly turning, Ron spotted Harry.

"Mate, what you doing here so early." He asked in surprise.

"Where's your head at... you've been off in your own little world all day." Harry asked concerned for his friend.

"I have...?" Ron asked.

"Does this have to do with my ...you know...?" Harry raised his hand and swished and flicked his wrist.

"No... its nothing. Just got something's on my mind is all." Ron admitted.

Wondering what had possessed him to ask his next question; Harry sat up and looked over at his mate.

"Want to talk about it?" He asked.

Ron starred at Harry for a moment, his eyes transfixed on his best friend. Sitting up and looking at Harry, he asked.

“Do you think I’m stupid?” Ron asked point blank.

Widening his eyes in surprise, Harry stared at Ron in confusion. “I don’t think your stupid mate. Well not until you asked such a dumb question that is.” Harry teased trying to get Ron to lighten up as he was not used to having to deal with serious Ron that often.

“I’m serious, I don’t get a lot of good grades, I do horribly on my essays, and we both know I say stupid things...” Ron said heatedly as he started to tick off his faults on his hand.

Taking a wild guess, Harry asked “Does this have to do with what Hermione said?”

By Ron’s shifty eyes and silence Harry guessed that he had hid the nail on the head.

“It’s true though, I mean I am lazy, I’ve never actually done my homework or studied on my own. I’ve never taken the initiative to do anything but play quidditch and coast by.” Ron said a little defeated.

‘Damn it Hermione!’ Harry cursed in his head as he felt sympathy for his friend. Maybe because this could have easily been himself.

“Don’t listen to a word she said. Ya, you may like quidditch a bit much, and you don’t like to do your studies, but who does. You don’t give yourself enough credit.” Harry said comfortingly as he weighed the pros and cons of getting up and sitting beside his friend.

“But it’s true though, she was right; I’ve always needed Hermione to remind me to do my studies.” Ron reminded Harry.

“So if I were to tell you that this pillow wards away bears, you’d believe me?” Harry asked with a raised eyebrow.

“I’m not following mate?” Ron asked bemused.

“Well point in fact, I don’t see any bears around, and I’ve got this pillow which I claim to be able to be able to repel all bears away. Doesn’t that make this pillow a bear repeller?”

Harry asked mockingly.

“What are you...?”

“Answer the question... is this pillow a bear repeller?”

“No, because it’s just a coincidence. Just because you claim it to be true doesn’t make it true, it’s just that a bear has never been around to prove you wrong.” Ron responded impatiently.

“Exactly, Hermione has always been around to tell us when and how to study. Me and you, we’ve never actually been able to study on our own because she always initiates it before we get the chance to do anything. Just because Hermione claims she’s the reason we do so well, doesn’t make it true, it just means we haven’t proven her wrong yet.” Harry answered back smugly. A little proud he had been able to pull that out his arse.

Ron looked like he was having an internal debate, he clearly hoped Harry was right, but his self doubts were holding him back. Years of being compared to his highly successful brothers, eating away at his confidence.

Getting an idea Harry grabbed a piece of paper, and scribbled down some characters.

Standing up and taking out his books Remus had given him, he walked over to his curious friend. “Tell you what, you figure out what this means... and then we’ll talk. Until then I got to go... have a errand to run.” Harry said as he smiled down gently at his friend.

“Are these runes...?” Ron asked. “Harry I don’t know runes, how am I supposed to figure it out?”

“A week ago I would have said the same thing, but here I am writing this down. Prove Hermione wrong Ron, figure it out. If you can then you’re clearly not as dumb as you think you are.” Harry said as he walked out of the room.

... ..

A week had passed and Harry was in great spirits. Ron had figured out his little puzzle rather quickly and shown Harry the next morning. Bolstered by his success, Harry quickly scribbled another note, with a set of runes he had just memorized the night before. He had solved them before Harry had turned in.

Soon after Ron had taken to writing out notes on Harry’s dresser in runes, with this constant back and forth messaging. Harry started to regain some of the enthusiasm he had for the subject as with Ron’s help he was starting to memorize Runes quicker and quicker to the point in which he had been able to read the gist of Ron’s note by simple glance.

Harry made sure to tell Ron this, and thanked him for the help.

Harry guessed that either Ron had a secret talent for Runes or languages he had never tapped into before, or he was exceedingly determined to prove Hermione wrong.

Soon Ron started to diversify his study habits, delving into charms work, and noticed a slight improvement in his last two assignments. At this rate Harry was confident Ron would start to achieve a few more EE or even a few O’s.

Hermione on the other hand was not doing so well. Her grades remained steady, and Ron had not let his drive to prove himself, drive him away from Hermione; but she rarely looked happy anymore.

... ..

Exiting his charms class, Harry was feeling quite pleased with himself. He had managed to finally perform the Evertamens spell they had been taught the first day in class. Flitwick having given Harry more

time because of his newly discovered sensitivity. But Harry had managed to be the third in the class to perform the spell. His stomach wobbly but under control as he vanished the yellow potion.

Walking out of the room, he spotted a friend.

Signalling Ron to continue on with out him, he guided Katie to the side of the hall away from the bustling crowds trying to get to there next class.

“Hi ya Harry. Two things...” Katie asked as she walked alongside him in the corridor.

“Shoot Katie...” Harry answered.

“First thing... are you doing the D.A. again this year?” she asked.

Harry stopped in his tracks. “Is it really necessary? I mean last year we had the toad, this year it looks like Dumbledore picked out some qualified teachers.” Harry asked.

“Well yes, but he’s only here until November... then who knows what kind of teacher we’ll get. If we were to start it up then, it would look like we’re calling him Lockhart or something.” She answered.

“True...” Harry conceded. “But I don’t know if a lot of people will wanna do it again...” Harry retorted. He had secretly feared that if he had started it over again, people would wonder who he was to try and teach defence. Last year he could get away with it as no one could be worse than Umbridge, but this year the students seemed to have a decent instructor. He didn’t want to come across as some pompous fool who thought he could teach others to stay alive.

“Actually, I can guarantee you all of the people who came from Gryffindor. I’m their proxy.” She added with an affectionate smile.

Harry blushed.

“Let me get back to you on that.” Harry asked as he didn’t want to commit himself to anything yet.

“Fair enough...” she conceded.

“You said there were two things?” Harry asked.

“Right...Why the HELL aren't you on the team!” she yelled at him.

Harry winced at the volume of the girl. Harry wondered if he would ever meet a girl with a yell that didn't make him think his ears were about to bleed.

“I had to give it up... I'm taking two independent study courses... McGonagale said she wouldn't let me play except as a reserve.” Harry apologized.

Looking like she wanted to yell some more but holding it back she frowned in resigned anger.

“Fine...” she huffed irritated, accepting that as a valid excuse but soon the indignation turned into a worried frown “but ... I'm the captain now; I don't have you as seeker, what if I loose the quiditch cup this year.” she said with a frown.

“Come now Katie... you guys did alright before I came along.” Harry said with a blush as he tried to cheer up the girl.

She raised an eyebrow at him. “We were loosing for 7 years straight, Harry. Every game we won since then was when you were there.” Katie reminded him.

Harry was about to point out their win fifth year, but she quickly replied “...and fifth year we got lucky. The chasers got a good lead and Ron Weasley had a good day.” Katie responded. Harry wanted to defend his friend but he wasn't there because of Grawp.

“Oh... Well still you'll do brilliantly. And if for some reason you do loose, more than likely, everyone will just blame me for quitting so you're still safe.” Harry said to calm the girl. He frowned though when he realized that that probably would be what would happen.

Katie perked up immediately.

Skipping away in renewed cheer, that scarily reminded him of Tonks, Harry turned around to catch up with Ron but found another Weasley staring at him in shock and anger.

“You gave up quidditch...” she stated in a cold voice.

“I had to...” Harry admitted defensively. He wasn’t sure why he had to justify himself to Ginny though. Harry had noticed the more angry stares the girl had directed his way as of late. He was sure he had not done anything to deserve them as he had not even talked to the girl in God knows how long.

“Why didn’t you tell us?” Ginny asked with a growl. Harry’s hackles raised in response. “I got distracted.” Harry growled back, not even trying to hide his irritation with the girl. Something about the expected answers and compliance some of the people in his life seemed to think they were privileged to, angered him.

Ginny seemed to take offence to this as she let her posture display it.

“Don’t you raise your voice at me, did you even think about Gryffindor or the team. I expected a lot better from you Harry James Potter.” She said with finality. Her hips swayed and her chin lifted as if she had made a fantastic point and waited for Harry to see the error of his ways.

Never before in his life had he wished he could strike a woman, Bellatrix did not count, but hearing the words spew forth from the littlest redhead made Harry want to whack her upside the head and hope her brains magically appeared.

“If you had ‘eavesdropped’ on the entire ‘private’ conversation you would know I had to drop the team because of my course load Ginerva...” Harry said acidly. He wondered if he had said the entire conversation in parseltongue as everything sounded like a hiss to him, but by Ginny’s flaring eyes, she had understood and she took offence.

Ginny crinkled her nose in irritation, clearly not pleased that Harry was no where as repentant as she had deemed acceptable. She ignored his response entirely as she was set on hearing The-Boy-Who-Lived see things her way.

Not willing to cause a scene, as some passer by's took notice of the aggressive pair, Harry stood with his back straight and shoulders high, as he took on the women who would claim to be feisty.

"I'll see you later Ginny."

'Hopefully by then you'll channel someone with a brain you mindless twit.'

Harry started to walk away. Ginny looked like she wanted to reprimand him further but by the steely glare he sent her, she frowned irately and walked away in a huff.

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Making his way to defence, Harry sat stonily up front letting the sunlight comfort him as he pulled out his notebook and wand. Seeing that the list of spells were not in his book he unzipped his back pack and searched every compartment.

Harry paused at one and frowned. There next to a crumpled piece of paper that Harry recognized as his course outline he was searching for, was a brightly coloured box.

He had left it inside since the summer holidays, it being his present to Hermione for her birthday. In previous years she had adamantly refused to tell anyone when it was, but Harry remembering his one summer in third year, realized it must have been fairly close to the start of term if her parents had given her money to buy her own present. Taking the opportunity that presented itself he had asked Mrs. Granger, who smiled enthusiastically and gladly gave Harry the date. It was actually today.

He had bought her a large novelty snow globe of the cove he had noticed she had gandered at it more than once. It was a little pricey

due to its size and detail, but Harry at the time had not cared. How many times had she given him a gift, how many times had she stood by him, how many times had she been there for him? But now, the gift and the date it was associated with gave Harry a confused feeling.

She had been horrible to him not too long after he had bought it, and her most recent insult, had not only severely affected his self confidence, it had affected Ron's as well. He had not said a single word to the girl, and had rebuffed any further attempts at reconciliation she had tried, until she had stopped all together.

He could ignore the voice of the girl in his head no longer. He had been a git; she had been one as well, but Harry knew he needn't have been so bull headed about it. It was his pride, the same thing that had helped him retain his sanity at the Dursley's and also the very same thing that had kept him from learning occlumency and preventing Sirius's death.

What was he supposed to do with the box? Just give it to her and make up? It seemed obvious, but the implementation and follow through, they seemed daunting.

"All right class, wands out, I want to see the first three stages of the nullifying field you were supposed to have practiced." The familiar gruff tones immediately set Harry alert, as he readied himself to be evaluated by the man he respected, but his not so dulcet voice was still not enough to drive the shrunken box in his bag, from his mind.

... ..

Resigning himself to being the one who reset their relationship once more, Harry had begged off training for the evening as, Hermione had, like him, taken to coming in late to Gryffindor tower, but well before curfew. Sir had frowned and questioned him on whether he was getting lazy and loosing his resolve, but after Harry explained that it was his friends birthday, he had demanded Harry be ready to work an additional 2 hours tomorrow night to make up for missed time, and dismissed him with an aggravated frown.

Stopping by the kitchens He had asked Dobby whether he could prepare a small cake, blueberry, for at least three people, one of them being a Weasley which made the cake slightly bigger than if it were for another.

Dobby had accepted with pride as he was asked instead of Chippy who looked on enviously at Dobby. Harry at least was thankful that she was not in tears, and glaring at the other elf in jealously like Dobby had taken to doing.

Making his way to the Great Hall he sat next to Neville and stole a sandwich from a tray as he felt like company today.

“Hey Harry” the smiling boy greeted in between bites of his small potpie. “How’s it going Neville?” Harry asked, taking note of a large collection of girls giggling somewhere behind him.

“Don’t mind them; they’ve been at it since I got here.” Neville said in response to Harry’s puzzled frown as he turned around.

There at the Ravenclaw table was an awkwardly smiling Luna surrounded by what Harry would dub, Parvarti clones.

The Blonde Ravenclaw was being pulled into huddles as they pointed at other people and giggled, Luna seemed to say something and momentarily, Harry felt a flash of irritation come off what he was sure was one of the girls. The girl in question just laughed as if Luna had made a hilarious joke and the rest followed suit but Harry noticed the slight squinting of the girl’s eye.

Suddenly Luna’s head swivelled and she stared at Harry. A giant wave of relief washed over him and the girl eagerly waved Harry over going so much as to stand up and call him.

Never had he not wanted to join the girl but by the predatory looks some of the girls were giving him, he decided he needed backup.

“Neville, I think I need you to cover my 6” Harry whispered as he picked up his bag, and busied himself with filling his plate with

another ten sandwiches, He didn't care that he was starting to get full from his one, he needed a distraction.

"What's your 6?" Neville asked curiously.

"Just grab your plate and come with me..." Harry said in desperation and irritation, as he stood up.

Neville confusedly followed Harry's instructions and walked along side his room mate towards a rapidly giggling gaggle of girls.

"Harry, Neville, Hi!" Luna said brightly, her voice strained as much as Harry's courage was. Both did not seem like they wanted to be anywhere around the tiny devils.

"Hi Luna... What's going on" Harry asked with an eye towards the girl he was sure he felt irritation come from earlier. She blushed under his attention and fluttered her eyelashes at him, misinterpreting his stare.

"These are the 'friends' I was telling you about." Luna said pointedly.

"Really" Harry asked in mock surprise as Neville watched the by play between the two in confusion.

"Hi I'm Neville." Neville introduced as he held out a hand to a girl with pigtails. The girl shook it but her eyes were on Harry the entire time.

'Oh...crap!' Harry cursed in realization.

"Harry, I just remembered, you said you'd help me with my divinations homework. And Trelawney's got a test for us next class, can you spare a moment?" She all but begged.

"But Harry's not taking div...Ow" Neville yelled as Luna kicked him in the shins.

"Right, Divinations! Sorry girls, I did promise" Harry said with a regretful eye as he picked up Luna's bag and dragged a limping Neville out of the room.

“What was that for?” Neville asked once they had cleared the great hall and hidden in a classroom overlooking the lake.

“Don’t play innocent with me Neville Longbottom, you know perfectly well what.” Luna said crossly as she stared at Neville with hard eyes.

“I don’t know what you’re talking about...” Neville said, but the quirking of his lips betrayed him as he tried not to smile.

Reaching out and plucking a sandwich from the plate he was still holding, Luna sighed in relief as she leaned against the windowsill and let the slightly chilly air fill her lungs.

Neville looking in-between the two let a faint smile cross his face before quickly saying, “I just remembered, I forgot to do my transfiguration homework, I should get started on that.”

Quickly leaving with the sly smile on his face Harry wondered when Neville had become so... un Neville. The boy was making Jokes, teasing others, and if the look meant anything, becoming a bit too crafty. Harry also wondered if he was going to get in trouble for stealing a plate, but figured he could return it before dinner was served.

“So those were the people you were talking about before...” Harry stated as he took a seat on the opposite side of the long window sill. Conjuring up a pitcher and two glasses, he filled them with cold water.

“Show off...” Luna said in mock sternness as she stole the offered glass and took a sip. Harry smiled cheekily back at her, as he was showing off slightly. He was quite proud of his almost mastery of the art. Being able to conjure objects of medium size comfortably was a skill few people ever attained. At the moment he was working on speed, which he was admittedly average at... for the moment at least.

“Like I told you... it’s strange.” Luna finally replied.

Harry didn’t need any bursts of thought and emotion to tell him that Luna had arrived at the same conclusion as he had. She was just choosing to ignore it.

They were using her because of him. Harry thought it would be bad form to admit it out loud so decided silence was his best bet.

They stayed that way, just staring out on to the water for countless moments before Luna finally asked...

"Do you still think they're just being nice?" The wording was accusatory, but the way she said it was hopeful. Harry was surprised to note that Luna was willing to look past the obvious to attain companionship.

A difficult dilemma presented itself to Harry. Should he tell her the truth and risk crushing whatever hope she had garnered, or outright lie and risk losing what trust he had gratefully attained.

Mulling it over deeply and quickly, Harry opened his mouth and answered. "I think that they don't have open minds, they probably wouldn't see a Snorkacks if they smacked it on its horn." Harry said with a smile.

"You can do better" Harry said as he took a slow sip of his own glass so he could observe her reaction.

Her eyes stayed on him for a moment, a thoughtful gaze upon her.

"I think your right... its sad to see such closed minds in today's youth." she declared tragically.

"That it is..." Harry said with a more confident smile.

"Does this mean you believe in Snorkacks?" Luna asked hopefully. A twinkle reminiscent of their headmaster in her silvery eyes.

"It means that I have an open mind..." Harry said with a raised eyebrow not falling for the trap.

Luna pouted cutely before turning towards the window and staring out at the water.

Harry wasn't sure but he could have sworn he heard a content voice whisper... "That's all I ask."

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Harry waited uncomfortably on the usually very comfortable chair by the fire. His discomfort, not from the chair, but from the anticipation of what was to come next.

He had gone down to the kitchens after transfiguration, and after watching Hermione glide out of the room hidden behind her extra wild hair. He had only ever seen her hair like that on occasions where she was letting stress get to her. He had reminded Ron of the date and thankful that he had taken Ron with him when he got the present, as Ron had picked up an assortment of knickknacks and baubles that were cheap but numerous from all over the cove. Like Harry, Ron had not looked too comfortable in his chair.

The room had thankfully cleared out, late stragglers rushing in to meet curfew. Ginny had stared angrily at Harry before huffing and making her way up the girls set of stairs. Ron looked at Harry curiously but said nothing. Harry thought it would be best to inform his friend later tonight, just in case Ginny had loose lips.

Finally the portrait opened and a familiar head of brown hair walked in only to stop at the sight of her two male friends watching her.

Moments passed before Harry looked over and hit Ron in reminder. Immediately he took out his wand and poked at the glass bowl Harry had crafted in his early experiments with runes. The bowl filled with water rippled and soft music pumped out as the water hit the corner of the bowl.

Harry pulled out the cake and lit the candle while Ron started his badly off key version of Happy birthday.

Hermione just stared at them with wide eyes, eyes that glistened slightly.

Finishing the song Harry and Ron were feet away from their friend with the birthday cake extended.

"I... Harry, Ron... I'm... I..." Hermione stuttered. Her shock and guilt obvious for the two people who had surprised her on this day.

"Hermione" Harry interrupted.

Looking at him in trepidation, she looked into his jade eyes.

"Make a wish... Ron want's the cake." Harry said with a smile.

A choked up laugh followed by a true smile followed his order and she blew out the three candles on the cake and was led to seat herself on the comfiest chair in the room.

"I don't know what to say..." Hermione admitted as she rubbed at her eyes. A warm feeling spread across Harry's chest and his cheeks tingled as Hermione tried to regain decorum. She was truly touched, and no matter what had transpired between them, Harry was still glad he could make her happy.

"You could say what I always say on my birthday..." Ron suggested.

"What's that?" she asked as she stared at the red head with unreadable eyes.

"'Where are my presents?' of course" Ron said with a charming smile as Hermione laughed and hugged him tightly.

Harry smiled at the pair as he pulled out his present and Ron his. Harry thought Hermione just might have had a good birthday after all. AN: Well there you go... a lot happened in this chapter, it was a long chapter (11,153 words long). The corridor partially revealed... I was planning on stringing this plot point along for a bit longer but decided it would get irritating if it hadn't already. Nodes are so freaking important in my story. You have no idea. Let the theorizing begin!

And some of you may be pleased to note I'm going to attempt my Ginny subplot.

Hurrah from the DLP crowd.

I'm thinking of making the snake a regular some how... maybe having Hagrid encourage students to talk to it, annoy it with the students boring lives and in the case of some, inane gossip. But the snake doesn't really have any other purpose than amusement on my part. What say you... does the snake stay or go?

They made up with Hermione... look at that, does this mean, Hermione is off the hook for the rest of the story. What are you stupid! Consider this a 'three strikes your out' policy, she's at two, and she only has one left. She might get an extra swing if it suits me but nothing is actually resolved like the last fight, it's all just buried under the rug.

I'm curious as to what you guys think of Dumbledore's punishment and Harry's wandless abilities. I see Dumbledore as being in character and out of character as a school administrator all at once. I figured Dumbledore would make them sweat and consider the ramifications of there actions but let them off because they had no way of knowing and as far as I know it's not against the rules to visit other parts of the castle during your breaks. Even if they are hidden.

Chapter 14 – Why the hell can't I be a God!

"Hey Harry. Is it true are you going to...?"

"Haven't decided yet...sorry."

"Hey pal, Colin told me that you were..."

"Haven't decided yet... sorry."

"Harry, How you been chap?" Justin Finch-Fletchley boisterously asked. Harry who looked half dead, had his head lying in between pages 325 and 326 of The Guide To Transfigurative Practices Through Time.

"Haven't decided yet... sorry." Harry repeated in a dead voice. All emotion drained away as he replayed his standard message over and over and over...for what was probably the 18th time... some had asked him more than once.

"Oh..." Justin frowned, not that Harry could see it as he smelt 20 year old paper. An awkward silence followed where Harry knew Justin was wondering what to do now that he had gotten his answer.

"Are you doing transfiguration, I read the most fascinating article in..."

"Just go..." Harry dismissed the boy.

"Right'o, I can see you're busy and all." And just like that the boy was gone. Harry got the impression that he was just as glad to be away, as Harry was to have him away.

"That was a little rude Harry." Hermione gently admonished.

Trying to mend a few bridges and build upon their damaged friendship, Harry had agreed to study in the library, rather than the Room of Requirement.

He knew it was a bad idea then, and he knew it now.

Almost every member of the old D.A. had asked him whether he was going to continue the group. Some had cited that they had never done so well in defence until they had joined the group, some that they wished to be better prepared to defend themselves, some had thought it terribly fun; the Creevey's needed no explanation.

The worst part was that Harry didn't want to do it. He had enough on his plate without adding to it. Even though he was not behind in his studies, and he had no Quidditch to distract him; the training had left Harry dead by the time he found his way to his bedroom. Having to wake up at an unreasonable hour after entering his common room had left him half awake. Everyone else had thought that it was either worry or stress, or in Hermione's case, the course load catching up with him.

Only Harry knew that it was because his trainer, had loved the idea of having Harry stay another two hours, he had extended their training time. Harry felt like crying after learning that news, when he had finally finished the torturous circuit he was given that night.

He just couldn't wait for the weekend to come as that was his only reprieve, but apparently the D.A. felt differently as more than one had proclaimed that they were willing to give up their weekend to suit his schedule.

He just wanted to sleep. The meagre five and a half hours snatched every night were never enough, and the two days a week he could manage to sleep in on, were a tease and nothing more.

Harry turned his head finally and glared at his friend who would dare criticize him for telling the boy to go away instead of using his magic to stick his foot in his mouth... he could do it too.

"I don't want to do the D.A. Mione..."Harry grumbled as half his mouth was still firmly planted on the page.

"Don't call me Mione... its Hermione; and it's only one or two hours a week, what could it hurt." Hermione reasoned.

Harry cursed his trainer for making him promise to keep his training a secret. It would be so much easier to explain his need for sleep if he could.

“Mione’s easier... and I want to use my weekends to do nothing... that’s why I call them MY weekends. There mine... not yours, mine.” Harry replied sullenly letting his eyes drift close as he lay there on the page describing the process of turning inertial energy into momentum while transfiguring objects.

FWAP

Harry’s eyes flew open as Hermione slammed a book down on the table for the seventh time.

She tutted at Harry as he glared at her for preventing him from regaining some restful sleep he so rightly deserved.

“Honestly Harry, it’s your own fault, you should just go to bed earlier.” Hermione reprimanded.

Hermione swore that her foot twitched slightly of its own volition.

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Harry waited not bothering to knock.

“Come in Harry.”

‘Like clock work.’

Opening the door Harry walked into the room most other students would avoid on principal, as getting called to the headmaster’s office was generally frowned upon. He on the other hand, could now tell when one twittering silver object had been switched with another. The one that looked like a duck had switched with the one that looked like a man golfing again.

“You wanted to see me, Sir?” Harry asked respectfully as he motioned to seat himself.

“Actually you might as well stand Mr. Potter, I have arranged for a little field trip for us. Of course if you are willing that is.” Dumbledore back tracked.

‘Field trip?’

“Where to sir?” Harry asked as he stood back up to his full height and tossed his backpack over his shoulders once more. Having exited Defence, and it being a Thursday, thus excluding him from transfiguration, he had hoped to catch a few winks before starting on his runes, and potions work.

“To the citadel, specifically a research lab, I have booked for ourselves.” Dumbledore explained taking Harry’s answer as a yes.

Reaching into his desk he pulled out a familiar set of brass knuckles. They were like the ones Tonks had carried as an emergency portkey, but built for two instead of 10.

Knowing the drill Harry put his fingers through one set and was portkeyed away at Dumbledore’s count down.

Harry felt the swirl of magic around his navel dragging him away.

But it was different this time. He could feel the swing of the portkey, as if a long string had wrapped itself around his stomach, it pulled him and swayed him in all directions as it pulled him to his intended direction.

On instinct, Harry mentally grabbed a hold of the string and tried to steady himself.

Before he knew it he had landed, and under the sheer surprise of the situation, he fell over, though he thought that just maybe he might have been able to land on his feet and stay on them this time.

“You look surprised Harry.” Dumbledore questioned as he lent out a hand for Harry to grasp.

Reaching out and accepting the help, Harry replied. "It's nothing sir, it's just that, the portkey ride felt different this time."

"Different in what way?" Dumbledore asked intrigued. After explaining the sensation Dumbledore smiled.

"Ah, that does bring back memories. Do not worry Harry; you have begun to focus your sensitivity for magic. I had felt the same way when I was learning." Dumbledore said kindly as he led Harry down an empty corridor that seemed different from the others.

"Your, sensitive too?" Harry asked in surprise. He could not imagine the man ever having to deal with his issues with landing and floo travel as he always presented a mystique of grace and sophistication, not clumsiness.

"Oh yes, I take it you are not fond of this characteristic." Dumbledore asked as they approached a glass door that was sandblasted to be opaque.

"Well not really sir." Harry admitted.

"You will be one day; it is a very useful trait to have." Dumbledore said with humour.

Harry was about to ask how, but stopped as Dumbledore flung open the glass doors to reveal their working space.

"Welcome to Lab 5 Harry." Dumbledore said as he walked in and immediately adjusted a few silver discs in different arrangements, causing the room to change in size and shape.

"You may see some similarities in this room, to a similar room in Hogwarts. The House Elves call it the Come and go Room, Argus considers it an interior tool shed, and I believe you have been referring to it as the Room of Requirement." Dumbledore said as a ring of crescent moons lit up within the centre of the room.

“The Room of Requirement is a lab?” Harry asked as he walked along the room observing equipment that could be described as both magical and muggle.

The room was spherical in nature, the ceiling as well. It created a dome like shape as if a squashed cereal bowl had been placed on top.

There was a long working bench that ran along the walls in the same crescent pattern that the room was designed in. The floor patterns intrigued Harry; made of glass with moving script running across its surface in so much complexity it glowed. The glass floor patterns also in the characteristic crescent shape facing the opposite direction the benches.

In the dead centre was a raised platform, just large enough for one to stand on, a podium a few meters away behind a solid glass barrier. The silver discs the Headmaster was playing with, were lying in little groves with dial markings around them.

“In essence, yes. It was one of the first of its kind. Although this lab is far superior to the originals, the Room of Requirement is still by far one of Hogwarts’ more intriguing treasures. I was quite cross with Armando Dippet’s portrait for not informing me of the room.” Dumbledore said as he finished twisting a disk a certain amount and then the glass panels flared to life.

Shielding his eyes, Harry turned away from the floor and tried to look away.

“Harry, are you alright,” Dumbledore asked in concern as he stepped away from the podium and approached Harry. He was wiping at his eyes as they started to water from the runes bright light.

“I’m okay, it’s just the runes are hurting my eyes.” Harry explained as he tried to look at the ceilings letting his vision clear away the spots.

“What do you mean Harry?” Dumbledore asked in concerned puzzlement as he placed a hand on Harry’s shoulder.

Frowning Harry answered. "The runes... they're glowing. Whatever you activated them to do, there are far too many. I don't know how you get things done with that much light." Harry replied as the headmasters face started to actually resemble a face now, and not an iridescent blob.

Dumbledore frowned for a moment before a look of dawning comprehension masked his features. Harry thought that if he had a light bulb it might have glowed as bright as the runes when placed over the headmasters head.

"I believe I now know how you found the entrance to the node." Dumbledore said with a smile starting to grace his lips.

"Really, how?" Harry asked as he finally could see the man properly once more.

"Step this way Harry... I believe another ability you have is to be able to see magic... the runes once taken off a sheet of paper should be out of the visible light spectrum. Only their effects are seen... please step on the podium." Dumbledore asked while he explained his epiphany; he hurried back to his pedestal and started to fiddle with the discs.

Obliging but trying not to look down, Harry stood at the top of the platform and looked toward Dumbledore as he adjusted discs, and changed their configurations.

"What are we doing, Sir?" Harry asked, tired of waiting for the man to tell him.

Stopping his movements he paused at Harry's words before chuckling.

"I have forgotten my manners, now haven't I?" Putting down the disc he was holding which appeared to be crystal instead of the standard silver, he walked away from the pedestal and looked at Harry with a calm smile.

“What I would like to do today, using this room, is discover your limits with your wandless ability and perhaps delve into any other powers you might have. To do so I will ask you to perform your wandless magic on the object I am about to create, and it will draw in your magic until it sees a pattern or until you have reached your limit. I must warn you though, it is heavily draining and I am prepared to offer you a day off tomorrow to recover.” Dumbledore cautioned as he looked to Harry for any sign that he did not want to go through with it.

A little nervous, but more curious with what was happening to him; Harry nodded his agreement and watched as Dumbledore reapproached the podium and placed the crystal down.

A large funnel like object faded into existence in front of Harry. The narrowest part opened up into a bulb giving the entire object an appearance of a novelty horn.

“Now Harry, what I want you to do, is to will your magic towards the horn, it will do the rest.” Dumbledore instructed.

“Will it sir?” Harry asked, unsure of exactly how to go about it.

“Yes... just try and expel any kind of magic with out casting a spell, into the funnel.” Dumbledore explained, oblivious to Harry’s confusion.

Not entirely sure what he was doing, Harry raised his hand, palm out, and pointed it at the centre of the device. Thinking about a wave of magic exiting his hand, he willed anything to happen.

For the longest time Harry felt nothing, but ever so gently, there was a tugging in his chest. Soon a wispy string of gold exited his hand and was sucked into the funnel. He had stopped concentrating but the funnel just kept on sucking. Soon the string became thicker and more turbulent. It soon was the size of Harry’s palm with the consistency of a stream of water exiting a tap.

Harry felt his knees start to grow weak and his vision grow darker as his body started to shut down.

"It is alright Harry; these are the symptoms of magical exhaustion. Keep your hand pointed and stay awake as long as you can." Dumbledore commanded over the whooshing noise his magic was making as it exited him.

Minutes went by, and Harry wondered how all that magic could fit within him. If what he saw was any indication, the magic he had released already should have filled three hims by now.

He was having a hard time keeping conscious... it was a conflicting feeling. He felt like he had more to give, but everything he could give was almost gone.

Unease grew within him as his magic started to pulse as it exited his hand. His body started to tremble in sync with the pulses and his back ached, as if his spine was trying to free itself from his own back.

As the first few waves of the new stream hit the funnel, the hole that was sucking in magic shrunk until there was no hole at all.

Harry had enough time to glance at the headmaster as he looked on with wide worried eyes, and as if in slow motion exited the glass barrier and made his way towards Harry.

Harry did not see the rest, as the world spun on its axis and his vision turned black.

... ..

"What happened...?"

"... not...ell you"

"...severely drained. Could have died!"

"Now Molly, you know I would not allow such a thing to happen, but for Harry's privacy, and for security measures, I cannot tell you what we have been doing."

“What could Harry have done that would enact security measures...” Molly asked with an unbelieving voice.

“Much...”Dumbledore said in a thoughtful one.

“...For now Molly, treat him as you would any other patient with Magical exhaustion. After he is coherent, please send him to the hospital wing in Hogwarts and pass along your findings to Poppy.” Dumbledore instructed in a much more commanding voice. This voice was that of a military leader, the head of an army, and Molly Weasley recognized that all further discussion was over.

Opening his eyes, Harry gazed his surroundings. He was in a large square room; the walls made of glass with 3 of them tinted a shiny black that did not leave the room gloomy as the inside was sandblasted to brighten up the interior. The last glass wall was as clear as they came, overlooking the familiar body of water he had swam in so often this summer.

“Ah Harry, I see that you are awake.” A kind voice emanated from Harry’s left.

There stood Albus Dumbledore, leaning against one of the walls with a red faced Molly Weasley near what could have been an I.V. bag if it wasn’t filled with a murky brown substance. It wasn’t connected to anything, but it was ever so slowly draining away.

Checking his person Harry saw a patch of tape covering a needle that was placed on the palm of his hand; a little vial attached to it, dripped the same substance into the tube from nowhere.

“Hello Harry dear, how are you feeling.” Molly asked as she waved her wand around Harry, while sliding hair away from his forehead with her other hand.

For the first time, Harry felt a little embarrassed that Mrs. Weasley was showing such motherly affection for him, as he felt a benign set of eyes from the headmaster watching.

"I'm fine Mrs. Weasley..." Harry said with a pleasant but sleepy smile.

"Of course you are dear..." Mrs. Weasley said distractedly while she observed her vibrating wand as she performed a specific wand gesture he had not seen before.

"What on earth..." She asked with surprise as the wand emitted colorless blobs of magic that shrunk in upon themselves and vanished.

Quickly Dumbledore straightened up in attention and drew his own wand. "Molly, I am enacting procedure 3, please leave his chart and I will attend to his needs." Dumbledore said in a friendly manner. It was a gentle dismissal, but no one could say that he had asked her, as even Harry had heard the command layered beneath the gentle grandfatherly tones.

Mrs. Weasley looked at the headmaster in askance, wanting to say something, but having no choice but to follow orders, she placed a soft hand on Harry's shoulder, and kissed him on the forehead; causing him to go scarlet from embarrassment.

"Feel better dear; if you need anything..." she sent the headmaster a glance telling him to try and deny her this "...ask for me."

Thankful in spite of his embarrassment, Harry sent her a warm smile and assured her he would.

With that she left the room and disappeared.

Dumbledore quickly placed his hand on a patch of clear glass and mumbled something as the room hummed the same hum his boardroom had so long ago.

Walking back, Dumbledore proceeded to continue where Mrs. Weasley had left off. Clear blobs shooting out his wand in all directions.

"Sir... what's going on?" Harry asked after a moment of silence.

"I am sorry to say, that the device I had used drew in far more of your magic than it was intended to do. I have ascertained your limits with which you can safely use your wandless abilities, but I had almost exceeded them in the process." Dumbledore explained as he started a new set of spell work. His eyes never leaving the results that his wand produced. Thus never at Harry, a very different type of avoidance than last year as Harry sensed the man was distressed.

"What would have happened, if I had crossed the limit...?" Harry asked, morbidly curious.

"I am uncertain, but your body had started to loose cohesion, and such a phenomenon has never before been observed when a person produces magic. I would ask that once I have trained you to recognize when you are reaching said limit, not to cross it. I do not want you to risk finding out what may happen on your death bed." Dumbledore said gravely.

Finishing with a final flick and a yellow mist that followed, he set aside his wand.

"You are in good health as far as I can discern, and you will make a full recovery, by tomorrow evening. But until then I believe it would be best if you were to take a sick day." Dumbledore offered as he sat in a chair that had not been there a moment before.

Nodding his head, as he wasn't going to begrudge taking a day off, Harry tried to sit up.

"What is a procedure 3, sir?" Harry asked in confusion.

Dumbledore chuckled. "I think you have earned the right to call me by my name Harry, at least when we are in private that is..." Dumbledore said with a smile. "You are starting to sound like one of the order members with this sir nonsense."

Blushing at the offer, and sign of respect Harry considered being on a first name basis with the man.

"Maybe when I'm out of Hogwarts sir... headmaster." Harry corrected going for a middle ground. It just seemed too weird to call him 'Albus'.

Nodding his head with an amused smile, Dumbledore conjured himself a tea tray, and had a House elf bring him and Harry a tray of sandwiches.

"Help yourself..." Dumbledore offered as he took what looked like mini egg salad sandwich.

"... As to your question. A procedure 3 is when the acting superior officer overrides medical procedure, for the well being of a patient under security protocols. Simply stated, I could not tell her about what led you to your exhaustion, so I took over your treatment. She was uncovering data that I had not foreseen being available to her." Dumbledore explained.

"Why can't we tell her?" Harry asked, knowing it was a stupid question but feeling it had to be asked none the less.

Dumbledore raised his eyebrow in surprise as he looked at Harry. "I am sorry Harry, I have assumed again. Would you prefer to inform her, I will give her clearance then." Dumbledore backtracked.

"No." Harry said a little more enthusiastically than would be polite.

In a more calm voice, "no that's not what I mean. I just wondered why all the secrecy. I would have assumed the order would be privy to my abilities." Harry asked, horrified at the level of mothering Mrs. Weasley and the rest of the women in his life would reach should they know half the things he hid.

"Ah, well in truth, only you and I know about your wandless abilities, and Mr Weasley of course, but I believed and still do, that keeping this ability secret will give you an advantage in any fights you may have with Voldemorts followers." Dumbledore explained. He did not sound condescending, thinking Harry slow for asking the question, but spoke in his usual kindly lecturing voice as if giving away new information. Harry appreciated that.

Harry had guessed as much but thought it better to check. But then an unsettling thought crossed his mind.

“Are you worried there is another spy in the Order?” Harry asked with a scowl. The very idea that history were to repeat itself set a rage ablaze deep within him.

“I am being cautious; let us put it that way.” Dumbledore said after a moment.

Harry could tell he was withholding something.

“Do you suspect someone sir?” Harry asked.

“I am going to ask you not ask me that question yet Harry. I must first deal with this using the proper channels.” Dumbledore asked in a tone that echoed great sadness. Something about who he suspected deeply troubled him.

Harry wanted to ask for a name, but wondered whether he could justify this demand. Dumbledore had been unusually straight forward with him this year. He appeared to try to do things differently, but he couldn't get the suspicion that by hiding this from him, he was putting Harry and his friends at risk.

Moments passed in silence, Harry staring at the opposite wall in thought, Dumbledore observing Harry with sadness.

“I know what you are thinking Harry.” Dumbledore said.

“Sir...” Harry asked, wondering whether he had used Legilimency.

“I have grieved you severely with my secrets, and I cannot justifiably ask you to trust my judgement again after all I have put you through... but I ask it nonetheless. If I learn anything about the spy that could put you or someone close to you at risk, I swear upon everything I hold dear that I will inform you and try to apprehend the person.” Dumbledore offered in an almost pleading way.

Harry hated the fact that he was swayed by the offer and his tone.

Regardless of the fact that everything within him screamed that this was a mistake... he felt like this was Dumbledore asking for a second chance. He had offered so many in his long life, who was he to deny the man his own, even if he had hurt Harry more than any other.

Nodding his head quickly without saying anything... Harry agreed. Fearing he might change his mind if he sat to think it through.

"Thank you Harry" Dumbledore said quietly. He appeared to have had a tremendous weight lifted off his shoulders, as if by Harry's one act he had lightened the burden he

carried by ten fold.

Not willing to let the moment pass, Harry decided it was time to get some real answers out of the man.

"You said you found out my limits... what are they?" Harry asked authoritatively. This was one thing Dumbledore would definitely not hide from him.

"Excellent question..." Dumbledore seemed to produce a brown envelope out of no where and handed it to Harry.

"These are your copy of the results... I would ask that you leave them with me, as you are not equipped with the proper means yet to hide these files. But I have instructed the Gargoyle to allow you entrance to my office whenever you should need to. So you are free to peruse the files at your leisure. I will keep them in a safe behind Headmaster Grips painting. Tell her the password is Gemma." Dumbledore instructed.

Dumbledore said this while turning his back to Harry while he adjusted his seat. This was odd, in two ways; Dumbledore had always displayed a certain style of power and grace where he did trivial things like adjusting his seat magically, to the point where it seemed as natural as breathing. The second thing that struck Harry, and he wasn't sure he could justify it as, if he were right; his abilities were far more than even he suspected. For a moment, at the name,

Gemma, Harry felt a terrible sadness, and loneliness come from the man.

Harry deciding to not let on to the fact that he might have just used his... Legilimency...? On him, thanked the man and opened his envelope.

A crisp white sheet of paper, with bar charts, spherical charts, complex calculations, and other information Harry could not make out, littered the page.

"Sir... what does this mean?" Harry asked, as he was utterly baffled by the bars and lines.

He spotted his name at the top, but that was the only thing he really understood, except for the odd 'if', 'or', and 'then'.

"I will provide you with a key to deciphering the information, but allow me to translate for now." Dumbledore asked.

"Do you see the spherical bar chart?"

"Yes" Harry said as he stared at the prominent 5 inch circle with bars and wavy lines criss-crossing around the perimeter.

"The circle it self represents the average witch or wizards power level, each bar represents a different form of magic that your body channels..."

Harry counted about 47 bars.

"Each bar represents a different power then?" Harry asked in confusion.

"Not exactly, while some bars can be attributed to only one type of power, for example number 4 which expresses apparition exclusively. Most of the bars work together with other bars to form your working magic." Dumbledore explained.

“Like a potion then... different ingredients to make a specific product?” Harry asked.

“A good metaphor, yes.” Dumbledore said in thought. “But it is best not to over simplify them as the more advanced your understanding becomes, the more confusing it will be for you to comprehend the charts with that analogy.” Dumbledore explained in warning. Harry didn’t feel embarrassed as this information was definitely beyond his understanding and even Hermione could not look at the same sheet and fully comprehend everything.

“I’d like you to notice the distance the bars extend to beyond the circle. And in the case of 12-18 and 25 there distance within the circle.” Dumbledore asked.

Harry saw that most bars were a good 1 inch away from the circle, and in the case of the ones indicated by Dumbledore specifically, were barely existent. The legend at the top corresponded each cm, to approximately 1000 M.U.’s.

“12-18 and 25 are hardly there, are those the evolutionary blocks you were referring to?” Harry asked curiously. He barely had any left if that was the case.

“Actually Harry, 12-15 and 17 are key to a witch and wizard to learn occlumency. 16, 18, and 25 are fundamental for Legilimency.” Dumbledore said in confusion.

Harry looked at the bars in alarm. “But that can’t be... I’ve been having flashes of people’s thoughts, and emotions, and I haven’t received any visions from Voldemort. This can’t be right.” Harry said anxiously as he made sure the bars he was looking at, were the one indicated.

“Yes, I am as puzzled as you are. But specifically more so as in addition to your conflicting testimony, I would like you to focus on number 8. Number 8 is related specifically to your mental state, intuition, emotions, tolerance for pain...” Dumbledore’s voice trailed off as Harry looked at the bar.

Script was written where the bar should have been.

Error: inadequate correlative data.

“What does that mean?” Harry asked. Nothing he heard so far sounded promising. It sounded like the ritual took away powers from him.

“I had at first been alarmed by the error, but once I consulted with some of the data obtained, your number 8 bar... was immeasurable by the machine. Your magic seems to be enhancing this bar incredibly, and this is a bar that is generally unrelated to magic in all aspects.” Dumbledore said with a little wonder in his voice.

“Is that a good thing?” Harry asked. Having lower occlumency and Legilimency bars, skills which seemed more mental in nature, indicated something wrong with his brain. Having number 8 so high though, sounded like a plus.

‘...unless I’m reading the bars wrong, and having lower bars is a good thing.’ Harry wondered. ‘Like golf.’

“I am unsure; these bars indicate that you have a significantly higher magical tolerance than the average witch or wizard...” Dumbledore pointed at a row of bars that stopped short of the end of the page.

“... but these ones indicate that it will be impossible for you to perform any type of mental defence or attack.” Dumbledore pointed to the previously indicated occlumency, Legilimency bars.

“But the puzzling thing is that number 8 and 16 are always at a one to one ratio. That is clearly not the case as number 8 is well beyond anything our instruments can comprehend.” Dumbledore said in puzzled excitement. Harry got the impression that he liked to solve puzzles as a child.

“Harry, with your permission, I would like to use Legilimency on you.” Dumbledore suddenly exclaimed. He looked like Hermione when she wanted to test out a theory.

Harry was hesitant but nodded his head hoping the man would be gentler than Snape was.

Dumbledore nodded back and pointed his wand and stared at Harry in concentration.

To Harry it looked like the man was trying to win a blinking contest. Harry didn't feel the pounding headache, or see the flashes of memories; he waited for the man to initiate the process but moments passed before finally...

"My word... it's like you're not even there." Dumbledore said in excitement as he quickly scribbled on his own copy of the results with a quill Harry was sure had not existed moments before.

"Sir?" Harry asked. The man was starting to resemble Hermione a little too much as he had the incomprehensible muttering down to a T. He had clearly proven his theory correct, but he was so engrossed in it, he had forgotten to explain to his less learned protégé what was going on.

Looking up, Dumbledore smiled a sheepish smile. "My apologies..." Dumbledore said not sounding very apologetic as he glanced down at his report every few seconds to scribble something else.

"... When I attempted to enter your mind, I found it impossible to find. I tried to use a silent Legilimens as well, but your mind simply was incompatible with the mental attack." Dumbledore said with a wicked smile.

Harry paused comprehending what the man said in surprise. "Does that mean..." Harry asked, not willing to believe the ritual had done something he couldn't manage for half a year.

"Voldemort, and any other witch or wizard will never be able to penetrate your mind again. This, infact explains one of Professor Snapes reports."

Harry stared at the man in intrigue...

“He reported that Voldemort has been growing exceedingly agitated since the failed ritual. At the time I had assumed he had been searching himself for any form of ability, as Professor Snape had reported that he had been meditating frequently, but I believe he has in fact, been trying to form another mental link.” Dumbledore explained.

Harry felt a great relief wash throughout his body, as if he were cleansing himself of one less worry. He had rid himself of a dire weakness; thinking back on the times he had easily been able to discern Voldemorts emotions, and he having been untrained in the mental skill, it frightened him, the level of information Voldemort would have at his disposal... the least of which being the prophecy.

“I’m sorry to say though, that it appears that in doing so, you will never be able to perform Occlumency or Legilimency, as it seems the magic has been redirected onto this nonmagical channel. This may explain your recent flashes as you call them, as magic has never to my knowledge been used to enhance this channel. This channel is still a mental component and the magics redirected were to do with mental communication so it does seem more than likely that you are capable of some level of empathy or mind reading.” Dumbledore explained.

Harry didn’t care that he couldn’t do Legilimency or Occlumency; this was far more ‘cooler’.

“How do I learn to control it...?” Harry asked; eager to learn this gift.

“I, again, am unsure... we will have to learn as we go along.” Dumbledore explained with a smile. Clearly amused by the excitement Harry exhibited.

Frowning for a moment Harry raised a question... “What does that mean in terms of my connection to Voldemort, will my scar stop hurting now?” Harry asked.

It was odd that he felt worried about losing the pain. But it offered a morbid sense of comfort to Harry, knowing that he could learn things through his ancient wound.

“Ah, that is another good question. You will note the calculations along the side and back of the page...” Harry flipped the page over and saw the entire back scribbled with writing.

“Although you do lose some sensitivity due to your diminished Legilimency channels. Your connection has become reinforced with Tom. It is no stronger or weaker, but it is near impossible for you to break without the other person having to be vanquished.” Dumbledore explained in a guarded tone.

Harry assumed Dumbledore was afraid he would be upset by the news... but Harry was surprised to note that he was pleased. It added a sort of finishing touch between the pair; the two were now unmistakable and irreversibly linked. It felt like He had reached a milestone, completing some kind of hurdle he had been destined to since before he was born.

Harry let his thoughts drift back before focusing on the sheet.

“What do the wavy lines mean?” Harry asked, skipping the main graph and going to a violently bouncing line that crossed two red lines at the top and bottom of the graph.

“That is another mystery, but I do not believe you shall have to worry about it. It indicates that you have a much higher magical stamina...you can hold within you more magic than you can safely expel. I do not anticipate you ever crossing the limits indicated as I am going to train you to recognize those limits.” Dumbledore answered reassuringly.

“You’ll train me sir?” Harry asked. This sounded like very good news to Harry.

“Indeed, I will most likely set up sessions for Sunday night, so as to not interfere with your physical conditioning. I must congratulate you by the way; Tiberius...Professor Conley, has deemed your progress satisfactory, which is high praise from the man. I dare say some of the Order would be envious should they hear such things.

Harry couldn't help but smile pleased at the news. Some days he wondered whether he was making progress at all. Mornings where he stared at his reflection after a shower and wondered if he would ever grow muscle on his torso.

He admitted it, he wanted abs. Quidditch had only helped define muscles around his waste. And those could not be displayed unless he was willing to wear a thong or less.

Which he was not... to the eternal consternation of one or two witches in the school.

"I actually do not see why we can not start now in fact. I believe a good approach would be to attempt to have you sense your own magic, and have that awareness on at all times. It will be difficult at first but I believe you are more than capable of the skill." Dumbledore encouraged looking to Harry for confirmation.

Harry frowned... he was feeling ok, but he felt like he might have trouble performing a stunner at the moment. Willing to try though Harry reached for his wand on the side table.

"There is no need for that Harry; I actually encourage you not to hold anything magical while we practice." Dumbledore explained as Harry stopped reaching for his wand.

"Alright..." Harry said dubiously as he sat up straighter and awaited instructions.

Dumbledore sat up straighter himself, and appeared to posture himself in a position he was familiar with.

"Now, you will find these exercises similar to meditation, but as you have magic available, you are able to go further than most muggles in the practice." Dumbledore explained.

Harry sat up trying to mimic the headmaster as he sat facing Harry. Straight backed and legs dangling, Harry waited for the man to instruct him.

“Now Harry, I want you to focus on clearing your mind, you must empty yourself of all emotion and thought.” Dumbledore instructed in a hypnotic tone. Harry let his eyes close and tried to clear his mind.

“Like occlumency?” Harry asked; trying to remember that he no longer had reason to fear a leglimens attack.

“I am sorry could you repeat that Harry?” Dumbledore asked in a calm voice.

“You know, clear your mind, that’s how you perform Occlumency.” Harry said.

“Yes of course Harry, please do as you have with Professor Snape.” Dumbledore instructed from somewhere in front of him.

Harry took a few moments but was having little success, a sense of worry and agitation was eating at him. Reopening his eyes to meet the glazed over eyes of his headmaster as he stared at Harry, he wondered whether he would ever get this exercise down.

Dumbledore’s glazed expression vanished and he focused on Harry once more. “Maybe it is too early to start these exercises. Much has happened today.” Dumbledore offered. Harry felt a little embarrassed as he thought Dumbledore was covering up for his failure to perform a simple instruction like clearing your mind.

“I believe Sunday at your usual training time would suffice. Do not worry about being caught out of bounds; the teachers have been informed that you have been granted leeway for personal matters.” Dumbledore explained.

It was a little late coming but it did explain why he had not had any trouble with running in to the staff.

Harry suddenly groaned internally though when he realized what the man had said. Sunday was supposed to be one of his two days off. He was going to make sure that he slept in as long as possible on Saturday, and God help who ever dared try and wake him up.

“One favour sir...” Harry asked. He felt he deserved this, after the day he had and the lack of rest he was going to have.

“By all means Harry” Dumbledore asked curiously.

“Do we have to tell Madame Pomfrey about this...?” Harry wheedled. The woman was still fairly cross with him for trying to escape; he didn’t know why he thought fleeing would save him. This did not even take into account Dumbledore’s stunt with the women; Harry was fairly sure the man would use the Citadel before going back to her.

Dumbledore laughed in complete agreement, and assured Harry that he saw no reason to tell the excitable women.

Harry sighed in relief.

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Harry woke up with a smile the next day. Seeing as he had the day off today and he was allowed to skip last night’s training session, he decided to enjoy an early sleep in and woke up late in the morning; feeling very refreshed. He could feel that his magic was almost back to normal but knew that he deserved a day off.

Quickly walking into an empty bathroom and showering with thankfully hot water, he glided down the stairs to the common room and contemplated what he was to do next.

Technically the teachers could not bully him into going to class as Dumbledore assured him that the teachers would understand that he was not fit for class that day; but walking around the school chipper and fresh seemed to be inviting trouble.

Frowning wondering what he could do... he walked outside Gryffindor tower and trotted along the familiar corridor towards the room of requirement.

“Hello Harry.” A familiar voice greeted.

Stopping and turning around he spotted the familiar earth toned clothing and aged smile of his former Professor.

“Professor Lupin...” Harry said in happy surprise.

“None of that Harry, I stopped teaching years ago...” Remus said affectionately as he walked across the floor and gave Harry a warm hug.

“What are you doing here?” Harry asked with a smile. As they continued their trek down to the great hall by themselves.

“The Headmaster said that you had a free day and I decided we haven’t spent enough time together. How do you feel about a little escape from the castle?” Mooney said with a twinkle in his eye that reminded Harry that he was once a marauder.

“That would be great... where do you wanna go?” Harry asked immediately. His excitement skyrocketing by leaps and bounds.

“I have a place in mind but how do you feel about grabbing some breakfast on the way there...make that brunch” He corrected once he looked at his watch. “I know a good place.” Remus said.

“That sounds great.” Harry said excited. Checking to see whether he had his money bag on him he turned a corner and started heading toward the entrance hall.

They reached the gates of Hogwarts in what seemed like no time at all and a familiar carriage with a Trestle was patiently waiting for them.

“Oh before we go...” Remus said in realization, he pulled off Harry’s outer robe and tucked it away in Harry’s bag.

“Muggle restaurant” Remus explained.

That was fine by Harry as he unbuttoned his shirt and undid his tie. He suddenly felt as if it was summer all over again and he had a day at the beach with friends.

Taking the carriage to the train station, Remus pulled out two sickles and went up to a booth with a bon fire burning outside.

Harry could not for the life of him remember ever seeing this here.

“Two, to as close to Sloane Square as possible.” Remus asked.

“We got the pit near the Harrods, or the underground.” The man asked in light cockney. His conductor’s hat askew and his black button up jacket resting on his chair.

“The underground sounds good.” Remus replied and led Harry to a set of stairs leading up to the bon fire.

“Sloan Square, underground!” The man called. And a puff of green vapour exited the flame. Soon the bonfire took on a green tinge itself as it activated.

“Come on Harry.” Remus called as the two walked into the inferno. Harry felt an odd tingling licking his shoulders and a strange tickling at his feet, and then they were off.

Harry had to admit, as far as floo rides went, this one wasn’t half bad. Like hanging on to a merry go round, but dirtier.

Landing in a crouch that didn’t lead to a fall Harry, thought today might actually be a good day.

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Remus guided him down the street and took a few random turns before stopping outside a restaurant called Sally’s.

“They serve breakfast late here. What you say?” Remus asked with that same odd gleam in his eye as he peaked into the windows.

“Sure...” Harry replied and followed the man in through the wooden door.

Remus guided Harry toward a table by the window that overlooked a picturesque street with freshly turned, golden red and brown leafed trees, classical architecture that had not made the street seem dilapidated, and a spattering of cars here and there.

It was a nice place. Harry could see himself eating here more than once given the chance.

“Mooney!” a high pitched cry came from Harry’s left.

Turning immediately he spotted a short little thing flinging its self on top of the last marauder.

“Why hello Emmy.” Remus said with a bright smile on his face. Harry had rarely seen such a smile on the man’s face but it was always a pleasure.

“I drew myself a car” The girl exclaimed cheerfully while whipping out a piece of paper and showing it to Remus.

“And a lovely car it is... Wouldn’t you say Harry?” Remus asked as he flipped the page around to show a Crayola sketched car with a little girl with bright blue eyes and black hair at the wheel.

“Should be in an art gallery” Harry said to the girl with a smile of his own.

Suddenly noticing Harry, the little girl blushed and hid behind Remus’s chair.

Her right ponytail bouncing at her quick retreat.

“Remus, we’ve missed you around here.” Another voice asked just as exuberantly as the girls.

A woman who appeared to be a waitress, with the same black hair and blue eyes as the little girl hiding behind Remus quickly entered the scene and leaned in and gave Remus a hug.

Harry couldn't help the devilish smile that crossed his face as he noticed Remus's blush.

He was a marauders son after all.

"Hello Laura. I've been called away for my consulting job... but I took the day off to spend with Harry here." Remus explained brining Harry into the fold.

Turning abruptly the women glanced at Harry and smiled. "So this is the infamous Harry, I've heard so much about. Pleasure to see the face behind the tales." The women said warmly with an arm extended.

Harry took the hand and shook while shooting Remus a smirk that made the man just a little more alert. Harry noted that the hand he was shaking did not have a wedding ring on it and smiled a little wider.

"It's nice to meet you Laura... Remus has done the same. Can't stop talking about you real... ow." Harry cried out as he felt his right shin get kicked.

A little giggle echoed behind Remus's chair as the man stared at Harry with hard eye's.

Harry was pleased to note that Laura blushed just as much as Remus had.

"Oh Remus... are you going to be home tomorrow... I have a surprise lecture to go to. And I need some one to watch the little munchkin." The women asked as she fought down her blush.

"I don't see why not..." Remus said with a smile that turned strained when he saw the deeply amused eyes of his best friend's son.

"Thank you so much... this means a lot. Oh what am I thinking, what would you like to eat Harry?" The woman asked with that same warm smile.

“Whatever Remus is having... that should be fine... and an apple juice if you could.” Harry answered. The little girl was sticking her head out more frequently as she stole glances at him.

“Hi there” Harry said. As the girl locked eyes on him.

“Did you really kill a giant snake?” She asked with a blush.

Harry paused dead in his tracks before shooting Remus questioning looks.

“Where do you get these things, Emmy?” Laura said in amused dismay as she lifted the girl up and into her arms.

The little 5 year old eagerly sat on her forearm and clung to her neck as she smiled apologetically at Harry.

“She has the wildest imagination.” She apologized.

“Don’t worry about it... I’m pretty sure ‘Mooney’ here was the one to let on that little secret though.” Harry said with a wink to the girl. She winked back with a giggle, understanding the gesture.

Laura laughed and led her daughter away while she placed there order.

“So... she’s pretty.” Harry commented dryly. As he leaned back in his chair.

“Harry...” Remus said in warning.

“I’m just saying...” Harry said.

“Far too much of James in you... and Lilly... and Padfoot.” The man grumbled.

Harry took that as a compliment.

“So... telling tales of fighting snakes, have we?” Harry asked, wanting to know how the child knew.

“Yes well...” Remus had the decency to look apologetic.

“... Your adventures do make for good bedtime stories you know.” Remus explained.

“Doubtful...” Harry said as he let the matter drop as he didn’t really care, but wanted to watch Remus squirm.

Laura returned with what she called a Remus special; sausage, bacon, ham, eggs, and more bacon with a side of hash. Apparently the wolf showed itself at other times than the full moon.

“How the man stays thin... every women’s dream.” She cried in exasperation as she left a plate of toast in between the two.

Helping himself but hoping that Sir had no way of finding out what he ate, as the man had ordered Harry on a strict diet. Harry was willing to follow the mans orders only so far, but he’d be damned if he gave up his hash browns.

“So what you want to do today?” Remus asked in between bites of bacon and sausage.

“I’m not sure, I hadn’t really thought about it.” Harry admitted.

“Well I have one thing I need to show you but how about I show you around the neighbourhood first.” Remus replied as he stole a glance at a familiar waitress across the room.

Harry didn’t have the heart to take the Mickey out of him. Harry let the man get away with his ganders... for now at least.

... ..

Harry was fairly sure that Remus had taken Harry all around town. From Sally’s to the grocers, the bakery, the music store, a school, the cinemas, and finally a park. Harry collapsed in a bench as his feet were killing him.

“There’s one more place I’d like to show you Harry.” Remus said oblivious to Harry’s pain.

“I’m a bit pooped Remus. Give me a minute?” Harry asked as he stared at the townhouse apartments opposite the park. A red brick building with white framed windows. Harry spotted a cat stalk a squirrel in front of the shrubbery, and a little girl stalk the cat, while what looked like the parents, watched with fondness as the girl not so stealthily approached the feline.

“Oh there’s no need to go anywhere though... were already there.” Remus said with a proud smile. He sat beside Harry and stared at the building.

“What you mean Remus...?” Harry asked in confusion.

“What I mean Harry is... Welcome home.” Remus said with a smile as he pointed at the door, 3 from the left, between the very yellow tree and fire hydrant.

Harry stared at the man in confusion for a moment before his words hit him.

“I know it’s not a house or anything, but it’s got 3 bedrooms, a kitchen and living room of course, and we have our own parking spot right out front.

Harry didn’t know what to say... so he blurted the only thing that came to mind. “You have a car?”

“Actually no... but we will have something to put there soon enough.” Remus said with a conspiratorial smile.

The man waited for a verdict, but it was clear Harry was struck dumb.

Taking the lead, he pulled Harry up and walked them towards their own door. Pulling out a key from his pocket, Remus opened the door and led Harry inside. The wood floors squeaked under Harry’s shoes, and lead down to a three way stop. The living room which was moderate in size, slightly larger than Dudley’s bedroom, the kitchen

directly ahead through a paneled white door, and to the right, a staircase that lead up to the second floor.

The kitchen was about the same size of the Dursley's, and the bedrooms were all about the same sizes as well, Remus pointed to one next to his. "That ones yours, I hope you don't mind but I let Emmy sleep in there until I got around to buying another bed for the guest room. There's not much but I figured you could design it the way you wanted..." Remus said nervously awaiting some kind of response from the boy who had said nothing since leaving the park.

Harry walked in a daze into his room; it was bigger than His old room but slightly smaller than Dudley's. A large window overlooked the park outside, his bed adjacent to the window, letting the cool breeze rush across the bed rippling the fabric on the pillow. A side table decent reading lamp and a book case built into the wall with the window.

The upstairs had shag carpeting instead of the hard wood of the bottom floors. The burgundy color contrasting with the earth tones of the entire house, made everything seem like an old time photo.

In actuality, the room was almost exactly like the one he had at the Dursley's except for one very important detail. It was given to him, freely, because Remus cared, not because he was afraid of reprisal.

That made all the difference.

"This place is fantastic." Harry proclaimed suddenly as he turned to face the relieved man.

"Glad to hear it." He said with a smile.

"The order just finished warding last week, and we should be set for Christmas." Remus explained as he walked around the sepia toned room.

He bent down and picked up a box of crayons that lay at the base of the bed. Remus smiled and placed them on the inlayed bookshelf.

The time had come...

"So what's the story with Laura" Harry asked, emphasising her name teasingly.

Remus groaned.

AN: I've revealed a lot of my secrets in the last few chapters... now why would I do that. I mean this is like act 1... and there are plenty more acts to go. It wouldn't do to give everything away at once.

What could I be thinking... hmm

I'm going to stop anyone now who is thinking it. Laura and her daughter, are completely and utterly muggle. Not a touch of magic in them so don't go and think Harry's going to have a little sister to look after once he gets to Hogwarts. Those stories are okay, but I don't want to use the two for that purpose. For now... just think of Laura as a single mom, going to university, while raising her (5-6? Year old) daughter. She and Remus clearly like each other, there about the same age, Laura's a bit younger, let's say 5 years.

A spy in the order... yes its cliché... yes many of you are probably guessing and some of you may already know who it is. I'd like to do this cliché a different way though. I'm only doing it because cannon as it is leaves this plot point wide open and it's too hard to ignore it.

Also... this story is half betaed and the part that wasn't betaed was the part that desperately needed it. Once its finished being edited I'll reupload it.

I've layed quite a few hints in this chapter so I'd pay attention...

For those of you who want to take a look at the townhouse I described...

www.viviun.com/AD-3175/

I will explain some of the logistics... but any inconsistencies that there are, are due to me not living in London, and not ever visiting this place. Also its fanfiction, so it doesn't have to be exact.

Also, out on my home page on my authors profile, I've uploaded a couple of pictures related to the story, in addition to some of the sketches I drew earlier.

Chapter 15 – Peer pressure sucks (a different perspective)

Poor Harry.

I'm watching him get mauled by the expectant eyes of his housemates. I'm glad I don't like quidditch... or at least not enough to play.

I ran into Harry as usual... literally of course.

I have to admit, I never enjoyed being knocked over so much as I do with him. Maybe it's because it's our own little thing, I'm honestly not sure, usually I am; 'sure' that is.

But ... oh look at that, Ronald caught the red ball thing. Good for him.

I tap my hat and it roars approvingly.

I smile... Ron smiled at that, he usually looks at me queerly, but for once he smiled, I think he appreciated my support. I admit I had had a little bit of a crush on him; it started when we were younger, and when I used to visit Ginny. Being the only boy close to my age in the area...

...well there were the twins of course. They were nice enough, but honestly I could never tell the two apart, I had to resort to guessing with them... what was I saying?

Anyway...

Usually, when I guess, I'm right. Ginny always assumed I just knew which twin was which; I never bothered to correct her.

Ginny's angry with me... I am a little upset by that.

No, that's a lie.... I am very upset by that.

She was, and is my oldest friend. Growing up in the same area, and being the same age, it was inevitable, but that never made the

friendship and acceptance any less special. I can pretend that I don't know why she hasn't spoken to me in almost a month, I can pretend I don't know what the glares are for, but I won't.

It's because of him.

Last year, he was nice to me, he didn't believe everything I said or most of it even, but he was kind, and he never made fun of me.

That was nice of him, and I appreciated that.

Last year, he was Ronald's best friend, the one that my crush spent most of his time with. I knew that.

Last year he was very upset... and I understand now why that was, or at least most of it.

Last year we were friends... I don't think that's the case anymore.

I watch as he sits next to Hermione, she's routing on Ronald, and so is he, when he isn't facing the glares.

I actually like Hermione. She has her beliefs, she's quite smart, and she is talented. I can respect that. In a way she's a lot like mum... but in all the ways that matter, she's completely different. I don't think she likes me, and I think she likes me less because of him.

It's a little depressing. For once in my life I'm starting to make real friends; and they aren't just accepting me because of him, although I won't deny that he is probably the reason why they gave me the chance, I think they genuinely like me. That's rare...

But the depressing part is I'm losing my first friend, Ginny is important, and I don't want to lose her, but she isn't the same as she was when she was younger.

I'm not the same either, for that matter.

Oh Ron made another save... Tap Tap.

“ROAR!” my hat bellows. He looks over and salutes me with a smile. I smile back, I try and hide my blush, I don’t like him like I once did, but if this had been last year, such a act might have given me heart palpitations... Old habits are hard to break.

Oh... he noticed. Not Ronald... him. I try not to get too excited by the fact that he frowns at Ronald. I think he’s jealous... he doesn’t clap as loudly as he did last time...

He’s jealous because of me... I have to try to not smile to widely, someone’s jealous over me... it’s a nice feeling.

Am I a bad person because I’m taking pleasure in the fact that he isn’t as happy anymore?

Either way, I allow myself to revel in the fact.

Oh... no.

Ginny’s up next... She’s trying out for the chaser spot; she really doesn’t like seeking for some reason. She’s not bad at it, but I guess she really just wants to be a chaser.

Who do I route for... Ron or Ginny. If she misses and I applaud Ronald, Ginny won’t be too happy, but if I don’t applaud for Ronald... he won’t... he...?

What am I thinking, Ronald won’t care.

“Go Ginny!” I yell loudly. I’m not sure if she heard me. She doesn’t turn or anything to indicate it.

“Woo, Ginny!” Harry calls out; Hermione is clapping too in encouragement.

Ginny stops and turns her head at them, and smiles brightly.

Oh...

No matter, I’m going to keep trying.

“Luna... get over here.” Harry calls out. Hermione gives a pointed stare that he misses as he waves me over.

I stare blankly at him for a moment. I was trying to keep my distance from him this once, if Ginny see’s, but now I have no choice.

I walk over and thank him for the seat. I turn and look up. Ginny doesn’t look too happy.

Hermione for that matter doesn’t look that pleased either, I always thought she liked Ronald though, but every now and then, I don’t think even she has made up her mind on the matter.

I think she would prefer Ginny dating Harry rather than...

...well speaking of Ginny.

She stares down Ronald, and starts her run... she’s going for the far right hoop.

She shoots....

Damn it.

Ronald just has to have a good day today. Ginny is scowling as Ronald teases her... something along the lines of “can’t get past your older brother...”

She has two more tries...

I frown as I watch her shoot and he saves each one.

At least Ginny gets to stay on the team... She is already the seeker, and no one was better than her when they tried for the position. But still, she will not be in a very good mood for a very long time...

... ..

The tryouts are over. One of the great things about being considered crazy is no one questions me being anywhere. I remember other people from my house trying to watch tryouts of other houses; they were soundly evicted under suspicion of being a spy. But I'm just the friendless, crazy girl; I'm Loony. No one bothers to question why I'm here... or anywhere for that matter.

That probably sounded very dramatic and self pitying; oh well... it's the truth.

On second thought...

"You did great Ron..." Hermione cheered.

"Thanks." He states with a rapidly reddening face.

I do have friends... the crazy bit... well who knows.

Ginny begged off coming with us to celebrate, she said she had homework to do, but I know she was just upset. I wonder if she would have gone if I had not been there.

Neville's here as well, he wasn't at the practice, but he caught up to us when we entered the castle. A lot of the gryffindors have been giving Harry sour looks; it's been going on for a few days now. Apparently he had to give up his position on the Quidditch team. The way he explains it McGonagale said he would have had to for his class schedule to work.

I don't understand some of the students reactions... he's in school to learn, hence that should be his priority. They seem to think it's about which house is better.

Even the first years are getting into it. They weren't even sorted the same; for all they know, they are all Slytherin's or Hufflepuff's at heart. Yet they adopted the same overzealous pride the rest of the school seems prone too.

I won't even try and remember the reaction I got for my Gryffindor hat.

It's sad really. But I am proud of Harry for setting his priorities straight. Matter of fact...

"Good for you Harry" There, he needed to get some support.

He looks at me funny; I don't think he understands why I'm congratulating him... I admit I kind of like to confuse him... and the rest of the school.

"Thanks...?" he asks perplexed. But there is a hint of a smile there, it wasn't there before when he was confused at my random proclamations, but it's there now.

Apparently were all heading towards the great hall.

The hall is bright and cheery today, the walls seem to sparkle and I'm sure that if Hogwarts had a face it would be smiling.

I smile brightly at the wall conveying a greeting. A few students look behind them and at me. I think they think I'm smiling at them. I decide I should smile at them as well... why exclude?

They seem confused. It's sad how common that is in this school.

But Hogwarts get's my message, I feel it brighten at my greeting. I don't think it gets a lot of attention. Although, it's not always like that... some place's he seems downright grumpy. I don't think he likes those places, like the dungeons or the battlements. It's a bit odd to hate one's self, but then again people do that all the time.

Oh wait someone's saying something...

"Hmm?" I ask dreamily.

"I said, don't you think Harry should restart the D.A.?" Hermione asks me. She's asking me for my opinion... that's new.

Wait I should focus on the question... D.A., I liked the D.A., Harry was a good teacher.

"I would like that, The D.A. was nice." I reply out loud.

Hermione is beaming at me. So are a couple of other students... there all D.A. Students. When did they get here...? I should pay more attention.

Why is Harry frowning though?

He looks at me with exasperation, it doesn't seem like he is angry with me, but I don't think he wanted me to answer that way... how was I supposed to answer?

"Fine...hold on to your coins, I'll set up a meeting time." He relents grumpily.

We're starting the D.A. again... I can't help but smile, that group was nice, I'm not sad to have some place to be.

Everyone seems happy with his answer; Colin seems to be really happy. There is something very disturbing about that boy. I can't place it, but I wouldn't want to be locked in a room with him, alone.

Hermione is still smiling though; I'll admit that I'm glad she's smiling at something I did. In a way, I admire her. She speaks her mind and is respected for it; I can't seem to manage that with out being criticized.

"Hermione... why did you do that..." Harry scolds Hermione.

Huh?

Why is he so unhappy?

"I don't know what you're talking about..." Hermione says with a smug smile... even I know she knows what he is talking about... though I still don't.

"Don't give me that... you know I didn't want to start up the D.A. again." he whispers harshly.

Oh... That explains it; I'm a bit embarrassed now that I helped make him do it.

"You were being silly, you'll enjoy it. Trust me." Hermione replies back matter of factly.

I think Harry is annoyed by that statement. He seems to be getting annoyed by her a lot lately. A lot of it seems personal so I try not to get myself involved. But it's hard not to notice. I am siding with Harry with what I have seen though. But then again, I don't know her side of it so I can't really pass judgement.

Ronald seems uncomfortable; I think he's afraid a blow-up like the first one at the citadel will happen again.

"Well it's done now... you guys think we should meet in the Room of Requirement again? Malfoy knows now so he might try and bug us or get us in trouble like last year." Ron asked.

That's a good point. The Room of Requirement is known now to everyone, even though the decrees were rescinded, I can't see the teachers being too happy with students meeting in a room that could give them whatever they want. It seems like a scenario that is filled with ...

...something, the teachers should disapprove of.

The only way I can see them allowing such a group, would be if there was supervision, and that would ruin the group slightly, as it would seem too much like class when there are teachers there to supervise, and I can't see Harry being able to convey information then. He is confident at times, but I'm fairly sure with an instructor there, he would clam up and become unresponsive.

"Well where else can we go?" Hermione scolds him. I think she is upset that he is poking holes in her plan to get Harry to teach the D.A.

I am momentarily worried that Harry will suggest the green house. It's large enough, and definitely secret, but I want to be selfish and call it ours and ours alone.

I suppose if he wants to give it away that will be fine, but I hope he doesn't.

Harry looks at me for a second; I think he was thinking of the greenhouse as well.

I prepare myself for his inevitable offer.

"We could practice on the grounds I suppose, there's no real need for secrecy now."

I am relieved and smile brightly at him. He spares me a quick smile as he acknowledges the fact that he isn't willing to give up the information as well.

"But if there's no reason for secrecy then we could still use the room of requirement." Hermione reminds them.

That's true, but I'm not as excited by the group now that I know that Harry doesn't want to do it. It seems forced... which it is.

For a moment I wonder whether he's only doing this because I said I would have liked it... I scold myself for thinking it right away. The world does not revolve around you Lovegood.

Eventually they decide that the room of requirement would do for now, Hermione brought up the topic of informing a teacher. It is in-fact a very Hermione thing to say; she adores authority figures, and I think she wants some credit since she is helping Harry plan some of his lessons. Harry's smart, but no one is fooled, the D.A. was Hermione's project and Harry is just the endorsement. Although I doubt anyone would be as interested if it weren't for Harry, and certainly would not be as interested in it as they are now as Harry certainly made it his own.

Something about his presence when he becomes confident and authoritative is very enticing. It certainly reminds people that he is a powerful wizard. Harry concedes Saturday's at night for the best time. Ron pointed out that some of the houses are doing tryouts and we

should check to make sure the times don't conflict. Harry seems very annoyed by this.

"Well Saturday is the only day I'm available to do this, I'm busy the rest of the week." Harry admits in frustration.

Harry has been hard to find lately, and he seems dead tired most days.

"What about Sunday?" Ron asks.

"Can't, I have plans for that day." Harry sounds evasive.

Today's Sunday, I wonder whether he will be doing what ever he plans starting today.

"What plans?" Hermione asks immediately.

As much as I admire and respect the girl, she does not learn. No tact at all...

"Plans, I can't change" Harry says in warning. He definitely doesn't want to let on what these plans are. Ron is looking shift.

Hermione looks like she wants to dig further but Ron thankfully intervenes.

"I suppose, we could get Smith to schedule the practices for another day. Cho too. Katie should be fine with it also..." Ron said in haste. Hermione looked at him strangely; I think she suspects that Ron knows more than he is letting on.

"What about Slytherin..." Hermione asks after staring down the fidgeting boy.

"What about Slytherin?" Harry asks in surprise. Even I'm curious as to what they have to do with this.

She huffs in exasperation as if it were obvious. "Honestly, how are they going to make it to the meeting?"

"There aren't any Slytherin's in D.A.?" Ron asks in confusion as he looks to me and Neville for confirmation. I shake my head, confirming his belief. I think I have an idea what Hermione is on about... honestly I don't know how I feel about that. This is assuming I am right that is.

"That was last year; we should invite some Slytherin's to join though." Hermione declared loftily.

"Why?!" Harry, Neville, and Ron question at once. I would have asked as well if I wasn't too busy congratulating my intuition for being right once more.

"Well isn't it obvious, we have to promote house unity, what do you think the sorting hat has been on about all this time?" Hermione replies back in defence.

"Why is it suddenly our responsibility to foster house unity?" Ron asks with distaste as he looks at the girl with a look he had reserved for me a year ago.

"You're a prefect Ron; you should be setting a good example..." Hermione scolds. "It wouldn't do to judge all the Slytherin's; they're probably used to being excluded. They don't have any one to turn to." Hermione replied back heatedly.

It sounded like Hermione was trying very hard to paint the Slytherin's as tortured souls who were drawn the short straw in life. I find that hard to believe, as I try to meet Hermione's Slytherin with the Slytherin girl who liked to taunt me about Daddy being insane back in first year, or that other boy who liked to remind me that no one believes anything I say so I had best watch myself. I'm probably biased but I'm not entirely fond of some of those Slytherin's.

"You're Daft!" Ron cried out in exasperated askance. "For one thing, I'm a prefect for Gryffindor, meaning I deal with Gryffindor house mostly, it says so in our rule book, and you know it." Ron reminded her. I get the feeling she was about to contradict Ron before he cut off her reply.

“Second, if the Slytherin’s were to join, the D.A. would break down into a brawl sooner or later, can you imagine Malfoy being willing to follow a word Harry say’s.” Ron reminded her.

He does point out a few flaws in her plan. Hermione seems to know this but isn’t willing to back down. “Just because were prefects for Gryffindor doesn’t mean that we can’t try and set a good example for the rest of the school. And you shouldn’t judge all the Slytherin’s based on Malfoy.” Hermione scolded.

Those were magnificent points, but far too lofty, it’s like she expects us to suddenly solve a millennia old problem within this one school year. She is definitely an ambitious girl, that’s for sure.

Ron seems to be building himself up for a rebuttal but Harry cuts in.

“It doesn’t matter either way; there won’t be new members this year, only those who came last year can join.” Harry said with finality.

“What why!?” Hermione asks in slight outrage.

“Simple, I’m not going to bother re-teaching every new student to catch up to the rest of the D.A. and I can’t handle teaching more people. Those who already came and wanted it to restart... I’ll work with, but otherwise, no new members.” Harry replied succinctly.

Hermione looks like she wants to argue, she does a remarkable impersonation of a goldfish. But for once... words fail her.

I think that may have been for the best.

There’s silence for a bit. I sit and wonder whether this will be the last I hear of this topic. I’m interrupted of my musing by Neville breaking the ice.

“So I was thinking 7:00 would be a good time. No need to meet so late and risk being out past curfew this year.” He offered.

“Sounds good to me... Start of where we left off you recon?” Ron asks.

Harry nodded stiffly. He really doesn't want to do this... I'm not so excited about the meeting anymore.

... ..

What ever had happened last Sunday had definitely had its effects on Harry. There was a confidence in his step, and glimmer in his eyes that was very different from before Sunday. The week wore on, and Harry gradually started to loose some of that confidence as his standard tiredness set in, but the change was still there.

He was also very introspective lately. More than once I had caught him staring at his hand in deep contemplation. He seemed like he was unravelling the mysteries of the universe, while also contemplating the simplicity of evil.

It was both inspiring and unnerving to watch.

... ..

I had been in transfiguration on Friday when I had felt it. The coin had immediately warmed up and I fought the urge to whip it out and discover the meeting time. I had already known what time and place, but to have the coin warn me set a kind of finality to it.

After class I had allowed myself a quick glance. Saturday at 7, it was happening. I couldn't help the excited feeling that passed through me. Even though I knew Harry was reluctant at best, miserably beaten into submission at worst.

I was a bit surprised to see many of the other students as excited as I... had Harry chosen to allow in new members after all.

I was far too distracted the entire day, the teachers had chosen not to assign anything new, Hogwarts was being very quiet, and I had been late to breakfast so I had not had a chance to meet with my friends...

It feels so strange to use the plural form. Almost like a dream about another person's life. It was a mediocre life, that was for sure, but if this all ended up to be a dream... well it would have been a good dream.

I make my way towards the great hall, the suits of armour are gleaming from fresh polish, and the forbidden forest is a beautiful array of reds and oranges. The air was brisk, and although I did not particularly like being cold, it held the promise of winter, and snow was always something to look forward to.

For a moment I wonder what it would be like to have Hogwarts in Japan... the school year, I believe, starts and ends around winter instead of summer, or that is what I was always led to believe. That would be interesting.

I make my way into the great hall... I pout as I see not a hair of messy black along the Gryffindor table. Neville is the only one there, but I was looking forward too... that is to say, I wanted to talk with...

I make my way over to Neville, he's a quiet boy but he is remarkably insightful, I think he is a little unnerved by me, but he and I share a sort of new initiate status amongst our friends. Ginny always was well known to the three gryffindors, and had a in with Ron, and all the time she spent with Hermione, but she chose to hang around with other girls her age. Sadly I had seen less and less of my friend once we had started Hogwarts... No matter, I was hopeful that we could re-attain that.

"Hi Luna" Neville greets me with warmth, and a happy smile. He pulls out a galleon from his pocket and smiles at me.

".. You get the summons?" he asked wryly, with a significant ominous look. I smile at his dark lord insinuation; we had both overheard Hermione's inspiration for the coins.

"Oh yes... I eagerly a-wait the day I get to serve..." I was about to refer to Harry as my lord but it seemed a bit too symbolic, so I decided to save my humour for another time. I'm not reading into things too much!

He smiles at me with humour in his eyes. I had never noticed but the boy has a striking Dumbledore-esque quality about him. It's not noticeable, but if you look carefully, there's a sort of hidden potential there that screams respect and authority, while calming a person with gentle warmth.

"You should grow a beard..." I advise. He looks at me in bewilderment but every now and then he feels his face for stubble.

After all, facial hair is key for the everyday, supreme, kindly, Merlin like wizard.

"Ginny, Hi!" Neville calls out, startling me as I am about to take a bite of my sandwich.

"Hi Neville... have you seen..."

I turn my head and come face to face with the girl in question.

Her face loses some of its friendliness as she spots me not a few feet from her.

"Hello Ginny" I greet her cautiously.

A war behind her eyes is taking place, I think she's wondering whether she should greet me back or ignore me altogether. I'm praying for the former.

"Luna..." she nods at me tersely.

I mentally chalk a point for me; sadly this is a milestone in my attempts to heal our friendship. But I'll take what I can get.

She turns her head and stares at Neville, who I just notice has glazed eyes as he stares at her... I look at him in bewilderment.

"Have you seen Harry?" she finally asks. She not-so-subtly lets her eyes stare at me for a moment. I wonder if I fidget as much as others do when I stare.

“No... you want to sit with us? He’ll probably come by...” Neville offers. The boy is acting very different, for a moment I think he... stuttered?

I quickly slide over to give Ginny room; Neville copies my action on the other side of the table...

Why is Neville acting like he... he... oh!

Ginny stares at us for a moment, she seems to be contemplating the offer, I look hopefully at the girl, she just might give me a reason to add another notch to my mental tally.

“No, its fine... just let him know that I’m looking for him, will you?” She finally replies.

I have a hard time keeping a frown off my face, but I suppose things should go at her pace, she is the aggrieved party here. But I’m still reeling over Neville right now.

Ginny waves goodbye to Neville and gives me another terse nod. I for once ignore it in favour of turning my eyes toward the boy.

His eyes are still glazed as if he had been imperioused, and a faint red tinge marked his cheeks.

“How long?” I ask immediately.

“What was that?” he asks as he focuses back on me. He seems a little surprised by the amount of attention I am paying him though.

“Ginny how long...?” I ask in clarification.

His eyes widen slightly and he becomes shifty as he immediately stares down at his plate.

“I don’t know what you talking about.” He answers back in fake bewilderment.

“How long have you liked Ginny...?” I ask to clarify for the boy who knew exactly what I meant... I smile as he becomes panicky. This is fun.

“I don’t... I mean I do like her, as a friend...! I like her as a friend, that’s all we are, were friends... I’m full, you full, I am... I’ll see you around Luna.” He says rapidly as he starts to get up and grab his things... in no time at all he is weaving past students and tables as he gets up and leaves the great hall.

“So much fun...” I voice my amusement.

The hall blinks rapidly as it grows brighter and dimmer subtly... the school agrees apparently.

.....

Harry never showed up... I decide to wander to pass the time.

O.W.L. year isn’t as bad as they make it out to be, relearn stuff you’ve already mastered, learn a couple new things, its all basically the same old same old.

I wander the halls mindlessly, thinking about how I was to pass the time.

This honestly isn’t very different from what I was used to a year ago, wandering the halls to pass the time before curfew, It had never seemed so... dull before though. I suppose my mind expects more of me now; like a child demanding better tasting food, where strained mush no longer suits his pallet. My mind demanded entertainment and other things to divert my attention.

Sadly I was having a hard time providing.

It took me forever until I noticed I had passed a very familiar piece of art... trolls with tutus.

Turning around and spotting the barren wall, I decide to walk back and forth, mindlessly as I thought up a good room for it to become...

a garden, a beach, a winter wonderland, a fiery inferno of molten hot magma...?

“Ow, sun of a ... stop it you blasted room.” A familiar voice yelps in pain. I turn and stare at the newly made door, and cautiously open it.

“Harry!?” I ask in alarm as watch him stomp on a familiar smoking robe, the room is unbearably hot.

Whoops...

“Whoops...” I mentally twitch. “I’m sorry Harry’ I didn’t realize anyone was in here...” I quickly apologize as he stares at me in bewilderment.

“Why did you want the room to be a volcano?!” he asks in bemusement.

“I was cold...” I defended myself.

“A volcano!?” He again reminds me...

“I was really cold...?” I offer wondering whether he would by it.

His lips twitch slightly as I look at him seriously. “Next time try a warm fire or a room full of sweaters...” he suggests. A very Harry potter smile graces his lips and I know I am forgiven for almost roasting him. Honestly I don’t think the room would let Harry become hurt from its self, but I’m not willing to test that theory out.

I take a look at the table Harry was seated at... the legs are fixing themselves, as they two had been on fire. On top, lay 3 books, a notebook, and a simmering cauldron.

“Why are you doing potions in the room of requirement?” I ask.

“Huh... oh this is where I’ve been doing all of my potions...” He informs me.

“Why?” I ask. Maybe Snape didn’t let him in his class. I think Hermione or Tonks mentioned that he received an E.E in the subject. I would assume that would be sufficient.

He looks at me with a frown for a moment, and then realization strikes.

“Oh, I’m sorry Luna, I guess you didn’t hear. I’m studying potions on the side as well as runes. I’m trying out for a magical researcher position. But I was lucky enough to convince Dumbledore that Snape and I can’t get along. So hence I do it here instead of in class.” He explains to me.

This would explain why he had to give up quidditch, that’s a lot of free time trying to catch up on your own. I want to be pleased that he shows such dedication... but I get sidetracked by his career choice.

“I used to want to be a magical researcher when I was young...” I inform him.

I try not to look him in the eye as I walk over and look in the cauldron. For some reason I don’t want to tell him about the specifics of how my mom died. I feel embarrassed. There is no reason to be, but its how I feel.

I think he knows I’m holding something back. I’m not sure if I want him to ask me why I don’t want to be one now.

A moment passes and then he decides to change the subject. I think that was a better idea. I’ll tell him some other time I guess... if I tell him at all.

“I’m brewing a magical sealant, you want to help?” He asks me.

“I wouldn’t ask me for any potions assistance if I were you. I’m rubbish at it.” I reply back airily as I stare at the book with unfocused eyes.

“Well it could just be Snape, I though I was horrible at it too but I’m doing better without him around.” He answers back. I appreciate that he’s trying to boost my confidence but I fear I should correct him.

“I blew up a cauldron...”

“Neville does that all the time...” He interrupts me.

“I was trying to boil water.” I corrected him with a smile. That was a fun class.

He looks at me in surprise and blinks a few times. “You’re right, that’s bad.” He admits.

But there’s that smile again. I think he’s teasing me. I kind of like it.

“Yes well I seem to have a knack at exploding cauldrons... I’m not sure why?” I have a theory that I angered the wrackspurtles a while back and they have chosen to disrupt my learning in potions, but Snape doesn’t believe me.

I decide to inform Harry about my theory. He looks at me funny.

“Do wrackspurtles make you sleepy... because I think they’ve been doing that to me for Binn’s class for years.”

“No, Binn’s is just boring.” I answer back.

He smiles at my abruptness honesty.

The cauldron gave off an ominous rumble. Curse you wrackspurtles!

Harry immediately attends to it. It doesn’t explode, but it’s a strange colour I’m sure it’s not supposed to be. Harry gives me and the cauldron a few inquisitive looks. I think I’ve made him wonder.

... ..

Harry quickly finishes off his potion, he managed to correct the potion but he says he should do it again to make sure.

Thankfully he decides not to do it now.

“So you know what I was doing here... what about you?” he asks me.

“Passing time...” I reply back. I’m currently seated in a comfy chair with the latest edition of the quibbler in my hands. We had passed the time with some minor conversation, but in general I let Harry work instead of distract him, I had offered to leave but he had said that he would rather the company.

I had not tried to fight him very hard on the matter after that.

My mind immediately swung back to what I was doing before I started to wander.

“Harry, Ginny’s looking for you.” I inform him. He nods at me in confirmation but doesn’t make any move to leave the room.

“Well if you’re not doing anything now, I though I might get your opinion on the stuff we would cover for the first D.A. lesson. It’s tomorrow you know.” He says.

Maybe it’s just because I’m in a hurry to get Ginny to talk to me again, or maybe I’m a bit nervous to be around Harry in such closed quarters like this, but I want Harry to find Ginny.

It’s a bit ridiculous considering all the time we have spent together, and especially considering that he’s Harry, and I have nothing to fear from him. But I can’t help feel that, with us in a room that could be anything that we can fantasise... considering my feelings...

“Aren’t you going to find Ginny?” I ask getting up from couch and stepping closer to the door.

Harry looks at me with a frown. “I was thinking of seeing her later, we aren’t...” Harry paused as he took a few steps towards me. I had automatically taken a few steps closer to the door.

What are you doing Lovegood! He doesn't have a disease. What must he think?

Harry's frowned more deeply and then a very fake smile made its way across his face.

"You're right, I guess I should find Ginny." He says cheerily. I feel a little dirty for causing him to be so... guarded.

I wonder whether I should correct him, but what could I say. 'Sorry I don't want to be in this room with you lest it become a brothel; its not too lady like to be thinking such things in front of a boy'... that would go over oh so well.

He picks up his things, and shoves them in his backpack. I watch sadly. As he speedily gathers his things to get as far away from me as he can. It hurts, but that seems to be what he thinks I want.

Way to go Lovegood

"Harry..." I call out as he is about to open the door to the hallway.

He stops and half turns towards me. The little of his face I can see is strained by the phoney smile he has on.

"I... I wouldn't mind going over the lesson with you once you are done..." I offer. Now I hope he says yes. I suppose this must be what he felt like when he asked me. That is assuming that he feels the same way I feel. He hasn't said anything but... I hope he says yes.

His smile becomes less strained but its no where as real as it used to be.

"I'd like that, but I assume you are busy, I don't want to take up your time..."

"No take up all the time you want, I have nothing else to do." I offer. I pause as I contemplate how desperate that sounds. I am so lucky I'm not a spy; I'm no good at the subtlety thing.

But I am grateful that his smile stops being strained and turns amused as he turns to face me completely.

“Well then that’s good for me...” he replies back with a grin. I would sigh if he weren’t here. I allow myself a cheeky smile.

“That’s what you think... how about you find Ginny, then after dinner we meet back here... It can be another all nighter.” I offer.

Okay, that’s not an example of flip-flopping, first you don’t want to be in the room with him, now you want to spend the night with him... spend your time with him! Time!

Which happens to be at night...

Damn my one track mind.

He smiles back at me clearly excited by the idea... of spending time with me...which happens to be at night that is... but then his smile dims as he pouts...

“I can’t I have plans tonight, I don’t think I can be free until late.” He says reluctantly.

I was about to tell him I was willing to wait but I didn’t want to sound like a complete loser.

Why am I so self conscious around him...?

I never cared about being a loser before... much.

“How about after D.A.?” he asks. I quickly smile and agree.

... ..

I don’t think I’ve ever been so excited about... well anything. After yesterday and the promise of night time adventures with Harry, I barely slept.

It's not like we had anything special planned, frankly I don't think even he knew what we were to do. But I couldn't help but shudder from excitement.

Our last adventure together... it left me smiling for days on end. I wondered whether we might head on over to the garden again.

There was something taboo about the thought that made me blush at the idea of a repeat of last time.

Hogsmead weekends had come and gone. Harry had admitted that he was under strict orders not to leave the castle. From the way he was behaving usually, I doubt he could conjure up enough energy to feel jealous of the other students. I had gone once but had quickly returned. Not having anything to get or anyone to go with, I felt no need to stay the entire day. Although I did not miss the stares. These weren't just from the students though. I was used to that. But the town's folk were specifically looking at me. I had never garnered much attention from utter strangers before.

Each one of them though held within their grasps, a copy of the prophet. Some how I new that it had something to do with it. I have never been so desperate to read the paper until that moment.

I had later snagged a copy from my common room.

Daddy always said that the prophet would report on anything they could that would garner them a galleon, but I had never imagined my personal life would help them in this endeavour.

Apparently through some 'reliable sources', in the school, Rita Skeeter had found out that Harry Potter and Luna Lovegood were now, 'an item'. Reading a quote from one of my own room mates, who claimed that she was my "gal pal"...? We were apparently trying to keep it a secret but could not hide our affection for one another.

I'm glad daddy usually at least talks to the people involved before printing his stories.

Of course this was weeks ago but some of the looks I had been receiving were starting to take on a new light. Ginny had not been very happy about that, and that was about the same time her frustration had started to turn into loathing.

I wanted to shake the poor girl, not only in frustration over her behaviour, but also anger that she was angry at me for liking Harry. She had clearly told me and anyone that would listen the year before, and the year before that, that she was over Harry Potter. I had not believed her then, but still... It was entirely unfair.

Still, I had not given up hope; I was just not willing to throw years of friendship away over a boy. Some how, some way... we would resolve this. Hopefully while Harry and I proved the prophet prematurely accurate for once.

I was always an optimist after all.

... ..

It was about 5 minutes to 7... I wondered whether I should go in now, or come late. I didn't want to seem over eager... It's strange how my actions are starting to take on double meanings now that I acknowledge my feelings for Harry. I honestly never questioned myself as much as I have now.

I almost didn't use the salt on my fork for dinner... fearing Harry might consider me a coward. But if I hadn't that would just invite trouble.

But Harry had not shown up for dinner, I assumed he was getting ready for the D.A. meeting.

Strangely enough Ginny had been unbelievably testy today. I had feared even looking at her, in case I were to trigger her hereditary ire.

3 minutes... I growled in frustration. Just go in Lovegood, nobody will question you for being 3 minutes early.

I swear if my mind could roll its eyes at me, mine just had.

Gathering my strength and fortitude I held my shoulders high, stared at the door in resolve, and pulled the handle.

It didn't budge... I pulled and I pulled but it wouldn't open. The knob twisted so it wasn't locked.

Blasted room, I need you to open... I mentally grumbled, as I kicked the door lightly.

The door swung open... swinging into the room, not away from; as my tugging had assumed.

I really hoped no one had seen that.

Letting my face go blank but cheery I walked into the room to find it filled with old D.A. members. I received a few nods and smiles, and some even said hi, but they were all waiting on Harry. Who was not there?

Frowning, I plopped down onto the floor after asking the room for some cushioning to save my tush from the cold impact of the stone floor.

A few minutes went by, well after 7 but Harry had not made an appearance, even Hermione Ron and Neville were confused. Ginny was mysteriously absent. I tried not to let my mind make connections with the two.

"I hope you haven't forgotten how to perform a Protego..." a familiar voice whispered in my ear. I quickly turned my head and tried to spot the body that the voice belonged to, but saw nothing; although I did feel a slight soft pressure on my cheek as I turned my head. I dared not believe what that pressure could have been. Especially after I felt my hair getting tussled by an invisible force.

To everyone else it looked like I had whipped my head into a frenzy as I snapped my head over my left shoulder for no apparent reason. I blushed as I pulled out my wand trying not to let my hand graze over my cheek.

“Stupefy, Incarcerus Expeliarmus, Seckae...” Harry’s voice called out, sending spells in all directions from all over the room. He took out at least half the D.A. in the first volley, I was about to take cover, but stopped my dash as I noticed students who seemed to fall over mid run as if they had run into a stupefy. I had no idea how Harry was doing it, but one wrong move and I might have been knocked out. Quickly deciding on a course of action I willed the room to turn pitch black and I closed my eyes.

“What’s going on...?”

“Who’s attacking...?”

“Where the light go!?”

Ignoring the voices I let the darkness settle and while I kept my eyes closed I asked the room to make the room ultra bright. I could feel the light leaking through my eye lids and I could hear the cry of students as the light blinded them, not permanently of course, but enough to disorient. Hopefully I had managed to blind the invisible Harry as well.

Quickly while everyone was disoriented I started to shoot stupefies in all directions, hoping I would get lucky, while wishing for more solid junk to surround me. Hopefully creating a barrier of junk I could improvise into projectiles to banish.

I pivoted and intoned a particularly bright stupefy when I felt my wand and hand being pulled to the left and knocking out Colin. The only one’s left conscious and unaffected where me, him, Hermione, Ron, Neville, Cho, and Susan.

I didn’t try and fight the force who I assumed to be Harry; I just turned my head away from my hand and towards where I thought he might be.

A moment passed before I used my other hand and reached out and felt for my invisible assailant.

Feeling a liquid like cloth with a soft object underneath I pried away what appeared to be an invisibility cloak to look into the eyes of a grinning Harry Potter.

“Hello Harry.” I greet. It’s only polite after all.

His smile becomes even wider as he smiles at me. Something about him is very different. I can’t place it.

“Hello Luna.” He greets me back, letting go of my hand.

He stares at me for a moment with unreadable eyes, and quickly turns and stares at the remaining D.A.

“Well done, you’ve survived the first of most likely many attacks.” He greets them cheerily as if he had not just been firing curses at us all.

He got a few blank stares in return, and Hermione who was panting glared at him.

“What was that?” She cried out in indignation.

“Well, seeing as how everyone was so willing to be taught by me, I figure I might as well teach them the way I was taught.” He replied back confidently as he strolled around the room revving each of the fallen D.A. members carelessly.

“You were right Hermione, This was fun.” He says while smiling brightly at the girl.

I started to see where Harry was going with this. If he was anything, he was creative. If I understood his logic he was going to work the group ragged until they stopped wanting to come.

I think Hermione understood as well, but decided not to voice her opinion in the matter. Which did not look too approving from what I could see.

Once everyone was woken and quieted down, Harry turned amused eyes on them all.

"Welcome back to the D.A. everyone." There was a smattering of dissent made most vocal by Zacharias Smith as he not so subtly whispered "...Some welcome."

Harry ignored them all with an uncharacteristic amount of amusement. The strange sense of 'offness' never left him.

"Seeing as you all wanted me to restart the D.A. I thought I might as well teach you the way I had been taught. And that is by spell fire. For the first half of the D.A., it will be a free for all, and whoever is left conscious at the end, will be declared the winner. The second half will be the usual D.A. study group."

"Why not just keep things the way they were last year?" a dissident voice questioned, garnering some support from other members who felt similarly.

"Why you ask?" Harry rhetorically asked in a tone as if he had already rehearsed it.

"Simply put... I felt like it."

I honestly wasn't expecting that. I half expected him to spout some garbage about death eaters not caring that they were children, some declaration that they had to train as the wizarding world was at war, or even a moody style declaration of Constant vigilance.

It was nice to be surprised, and it did shut most of the mutinous members up.

But, not for long of course...

"And if we don't feel like it?" Zacharias challenged. I honestly don't know why that boy joined if all he ever did was cause trouble.

"Then you're all free to leave, and I will disband the D.A. and continue to laze about on my Saturday. But I had assumed by all your vocal enthusiasm that you wanted the D.A. back that you also wanted me to continue to teach you all as I saw fit. If that is not the case..." Harry

had gotten good at manipulating a large crowd. I would have almost called his approach Slytherin.

The dissenters immediately shut up under the threat, and the non dissenters, quickly shushed them for fear of losing the D.A. altogether.

At the acquiescence of the crowd, Harry continued the meeting as he had the previous year. Some of the students had managed to perform a better Patronus than previous attempts where near everyone had slightly cloudy but distinctly shaped creatures. Most could be classified as bird, four legged, two legged, tail... and so forth. The big surprise being Susan's perfected Patronus, a respectable Arabian horse.

Its silvery tail glinting proudly.

Harry made sure to offer his compliments for her achievement and had the class congratulate her. The girl blushed, but I had a feeling some of the blush was attributed to Harry specifically rather than the success and attention.

All in all, considering Harry's attempt at sabotaging the meeting, the meeting was a success. Some of the renewed vigour due to one of its own members being able to perform an advanced piece of defensive magic on the first day. Even if the reason was due more to Harry's involvement or her own dedication.

I was about to go up to Harry and wait out the other members to leave, but stopped as I noticed the fidgeting form of Harry's previous girlfriend.

Cho Chang, an exotic beauty if there ever was one. I wanted to find a fault with her but I could not. She was never mean to me, and she often disapproved of other members of my house teasing me. She had often, using her powers that being a prefect had given her encouraged others to cease there tormenting of myself and others, and did I mention she was stunning.

How was I to compare to such a girl. What if Harry still liked her...?

I wanted to escape the room and be away, for fear of seeing there reconciling with my own eyes, but my legs would not work. I desperately wished that I was invisible. If only to not be compared next to the girl...

Did I mention she was a beautiful?

Suddenly I felt an odd sensation of having a water like substance cover me from head to toe... I stretched out my hand and felt the silvery cloth of Harry's invisibility cloak over top me.

I practically grovelled my thanks to the room and its inventor.

I watched as all the members of the D.A. left sans Cho. Harry looked around inquisitively before stopping on the form of his ex. He seemed a bit awkward as he could not look the girl in the eye.

"Hi Harry." Cho greeted shyly.

"Hello Cho." Harry replied back awkwardly as he scratched the back of his head.

An awkward silence followed where neither party seemed to want to start.

"I honestly wasn't sure you would come..." Harry finally said.

Harry looked up onto Cho's face and quickly backtracked based on her crestfallen face.

"Not that your unwelcome, I'm glad you came." He said quickly to comfort the girl.

Cho seemed to swell with some unidentified amount of courage and smiled back in relief.

"I'm glad; you were great today by the way. It was a... intriguing lesson." Cho said after searching for the right word to describe it.

Personally I would have described it as funny or creative... but whatever.

I'm not biased.

"Thanks... I honestly didn't want to do the D.A. actually. I was trying to scare everyone away." Harry admitted. I scowled at his sheepish grin.

Cho Laughed. I was sickened as even her laugh sounded charming and feminine... like listening to a wind chime.

I felt like throwing up.

Another awkward silence followed as both tried to think up something to say.

"I made head girl..." Cho offered up. She seemed unsure when she said it.

Harry smiled brightly, and a little relieved that something was said to break the silence.

"That's great Cho. You deserve it." He complimented.

She smiled back at him with a little blush on her cheeks that made her seem unbearably sweet. "I don't know about that, Margold from Hufflepuff has better grades than anyone, and Patterson from Gryffindor is practically a prodigy in charms." She retorted modestly.

"Ya but there not head girl, now are they?" Harry retorted back with a familiar smile. Cho's blush became if anything, redder as she ducked her head and said thanks.

Taking a deep breath, Cho raised her head with that same determined poise Hermione strutted and looked Harry in the eye.

"Listen... Harry, last year... I... It was a bad year for me, I didn't treat you fairly, I was hoping, that... maybe we could try again." Cho finally asked, cutting all pretence as she asked the question I was dreading.

I might as well have thrown in the towel right now. Who was I compared to this near vella like women. Just some crazy girl who managed to share a few laughs with the boy, that's who.

"Cho I..." Harry stammered. God he's so overjoyed he can't form a complete sentence. I wanted to move and get out of the room but my feet wouldn't let me.

"... I... I'm sorry Cho, but I can't."

Huh!

I look up at Harry in shocked disbelief. He was turning her down, the perfect beautiful, smart, beautiful, funny, beautiful, sporty, and beautiful girl. I had heard the lurid remarks other boys had made about her, she was a benchmark for the school. Yet here Harry potter, the Male benchmark was turning her away. It was like Prince charming turning away snow white. It just wasn't done.

I felt bad for Cho as I watched the obvious disappointment mar her face. I was afraid she might cry, but she pulled herself together, and looked up at Harry with a bright smile that was betrayed by her watery eyes.

"No, I understand.... I..." Cho seemed to be trying to find words to help her play it cool but I feared she might make a run for it. What am I even doing here, I shouldn't be spying on her and him like this... this is a private moment. I should go... I will go... Here I go... I'm just going to move my feet, right.... Now!

Damn you feet!

"Listen Cho... its not..."

"There's no need to explain Harry, I..."

"I like you Cho... it's just that..."

"Really Harry, there's no need. I'm a big girl; I'm not going to..."

"I like Luna!" Harry all but yelled.

I stared at him in shock...

Harry looked at Cho in embarrassment from admitting it out loud.

Cho too looked shocked, I assumed by his abrupt and honest answer.

I was still shocked that he liked me. I mean I had hoped but... I mean He's Harry Potter, even if he wasn't this mythic hero in the wizarding world, he's Harry Potter. Every girl, even some of the Slytherin's, would date him in a heart beat if he had asked them.

To have him say that he liked me... there were no words to describe how dumbfounded I was. And considering my feelings for him... again, there were no words.

"I like you Cho, and I understand why you had such a tough year last year... God knows I wasn't any help to you..."

"It wasn't your fault... I heard that "Cho tried to comfort but he quickly interrupted.

"No that's no excuse... I still could have been there for you, but I was too self absorbed in my own problems to pay you the attention you deserved, and I definitely handled our first date poorly."

Cho smiled a little in remembrance. "Ya ... I guess you could have done better." She said while grinning at him to let him know that there were no hard feelings.

He grinned back a little sheepishly. "Ya, suppose I could have... I like you Cho, and maybe if things had gone differently, who knows, but... well I like Luna and it wouldn't be fair to you, to lead you on while I had feelings for her." He admitted while scratching the back of his head some more.

Cho looked at him with a more sincere smile. "She's a lucky girl, that Luna." She commented.

I felt bad for my earlier jealousy... Damn Cho for being so reasonable and un-vindictive.

"Well I don't know about that... I don't know how she feels. For all I know she just wants to be friends." Harry mumbled back a little self disparagingly. I wanted to shout that he was wrong but my voice wouldn't work... and also that would have been a bad idea as I technically wasn't supposed to be here... nope feet still won't move.

"So, the article... your not ..." Cho questioned. Letting her curiosity take hold.

Harry blushed. "Well... it's premature at best... I haven't told Luna yet how I ... I haven't told anyone..." His deep blush deepened further.

If anything Cho's smile got brighter. "Oh... so its one of those... secret pining. The prophet would pay good gold for that information..." she said teasingly. Harry looked up immediately and grumbled that it wasn't funny, even though I could see the corners of his mouth twitch. I had no reservations and smiled fully at the joke.

"Don't worry Harry, your secrets safe with me." she said warmly. She seemed to struggle internally with herself before gathering her resolve.

Looking up she walked forward and enveloped Harry in a warm hug. Harry momentarily surprised had his hands out before wrapping them around the girl in a self conscious but steadily warmer hug.

"You're a great guy Harry. Luna would be an idiot to turn you down." She whispered, but loud enough for it to echo around the room.

"Thanks Cho... If it means anything... you were my first crush... and only kiss for that matter. I'm honestly glad it was you. I can't see anyone else being so great and I definitely don't want to loose you... as a friend." Harry said kindly, in the same eerie whisper that echoed through out the room.

Cho seemed to tighten her grip on him and hitched slightly as if she were about to cry...

Feeling vile for intruding on such a personal event, I finally managed to drag my feet and moved over by the door, where I faced the dilemma of how to exit without drawing attention. Deciding to compromise I faced the wall and asked the room to place a silencing charm around me.

Everything went silent and I stared at the mortar for what felt like forever.

Eventually out the corner of my eye I spotted Cho. I turned to face the girl and tried not to notice the silent tear make its way down her cheek. She stopped to take a deep breath and held her head up high and swung open the door to allow her a dignified exit. I followed in her wake and walked the opposite way from her.

I leaned against the wall and tried not to think about what I had just seen and heard. But that was sadly all I could do. I suppose it would have been hypocritical for me to be angry with the girl for liking Harry, I'd be doing what Ginny is doing to me, and I definitely didn't like that.

I'd like to think I would have been able to be mature about it, but I had never really been in a situation like this before so I can't honestly say that. Would I have become a crazy stalker, never being able to let go, and constantly wondering what could have been. The idea was definitely not appealing. I guess the only thing I could honestly try to do was be like Cho. Put my heart out there, and hope for the best... hopefully I would not be rejected but, I had to be open to the idea... though hearing the object of my affections already admit to having feelings for me certainly helped.

I was distracted from my musing by a door opening and a black mop of hair peeking out. A parchment in his grasp as he turned down and looked at it and then at me.

"Luna?" He asked.

"Hmm?" I asked back as I stared at him with a blush.

“Are you under my invisibility cloak?” He asked as he squinted into the darkness.

I completely forgot I was invisible and quickly pulled it off and handed it over.

“Sorry, I didn’t want to be seen” I mislead. He didn’t need to know that it was him I didn’t want seeing me... or how I used this anonymity.

He let it slide indicating that he didn’t suspect me. “No it’s no problem... sorry I took so long, I ... Cho just wanted to catch up is all.”

I didn’t call him on his lie. Sometimes I suppose its okay to lie, and I could see why he did so now. I even approved slightly as weird as that sounded.

“How is she...?” I asked automatically, unsure of why I felt the need to ask such a question seeing as I already knew.

He paused... thinking it over. “Some trouble, but she’ll be fine...”

I think he said the last bit for himself than anything else.

Letting the silence pass. I tried to remember what we had planned for tonight. That’s right...

“So, what do you want to do tonight?” I ask excitedly, snapping his attention back to me as he lets a grin surface.

“I was thinking maybe we could pay the garden a visit, I had doobby prepare a couple snacks for us... Dobby is one of the house elves here... he probably packed too much... We could hang out there for a while, and just see where the night takes us.” Harry offered.

Cho was right; I am a lucky girl... I allow a bright smile to grace my lips as I agree.

... ..

Dobby the house elf was great. We marched our way down to the kitchens and he showed me how to gain entrance by tickling a pear. The house elves were fun in their own right, I almost asked Harry to spend the night here with them, I could see myself helping the dozen house elves who were preparing vegetables and basting some meats for tomorrow. Dobby seemed to treat Harry with an odd mixture of reverence and pride. As we left he seemed to look at Harry as if he were his own child, sending him off on his very first date. Even the house elf that was at the citadel was there... she took on a more motherly role and I could almost see the two as short surrogate, parents to Harry.

Harry also showed me the map in detail. I had seen it last year during D.A. when we were leaving and he showed us where to go to avoid filch and the teachers, but I had not had a chance to look at the map in depth.

It was very impressive. We had used it to avoid filch, and Ms. Norris. I was a little disappointed we could not give them a slip again, like last time, but it did involve quite a bit of stealth which I enjoyed as it involved being under the invisibility cloak. The cloak being built for one, to fit me and him proved to be a very snug affair.

Finally making our way towards the fountain I tried to open the passage and managed to find the correct stone and called out the password, and watched as the passage formed. Following me, Harry and I made our way towards the green house. Somewhere along the way, he had grasped my hand. I had not pulled away. That's for sure.

Harry was acting much bolder than usual. That's not to say he was anything but a gentleman, but that offness about him was much more pronounced. Maybe it was finally revealing his feelings to another person, or maybe that's just the way he was, I wasn't sure.

The Harry I knew would never have been able to reach for my hand or if I'm right, steal a chaste kiss under an invisibility cloak in a room full of his friends and peers.

I certainly wasn't complaining but I was definitely left feeling off balance. There was a certain danger to that that I found exciting. I guess this is the excitement girls often feel over dating a 'bad boy'.

It was definitely intoxicating.

Finally making our way towards the exit in what felt like forever and no time at all, Harry used his other hand to open up the passage, and I pulled him up the stairs into our secret getaway.

It was every bit as wonderful as I remembered it. The starless sky shined down upon us and the enormous tree the glass structure was built around had turned every color between brown and yellow imaginable. The floor which had some granite stepping stones but was mostly grass was ideal for sitting on. I briefly wondered how it stayed cut to this perfect height, but I decided not to question the magic that was the green house.

Harry, who had not let go of my hand, had guided me to the base of the tree near what I realized was a small pond with fish swimming around the inside. He pulled the basket Dobby had prepared over and set a blanket down, and unloaded what could have been considered a small feast.

I'm about to comment on the fact when Harry's watch beeps. I turned and looked at my own watch in curiosity and smile.

"Happy Halloween Harry." I greet him.

His smile falters for a moment and then he chuckled amusedly.

"What?" I ask, wondering what could be so funny.

"Huh... oh it's nothing... its silly really." Harry informs me.

"What..." I ask intrigued.

"No, it's just... usually something bad happens on Halloween, I doubt that" He stops talking as my face turns pale and I look at his head in horror.

He stares at me in confusion until he feels a drop hit his eye. He raises a hand toward his forehead in confusion for a moment and draws back a bloody hand that had come in contact with his bleeding scar.

“Harry?” I asked in shocked worry. He looks at me funny for a moment. I’m alarmed as his eyes widen and his pupils start to turn snake like...

“Harry, what’s happening...?” I ask desperately as I crawl over to him.

“No” he almost yells in a strange double voice as he crawls backwards and away from my outstretched hands. He looks terribly frightened.

“Harry?” I ask as I slowly make my way over. He’s so scared... of me?

“Stay Back Luna... get away...” He seemed to want to warn me about something before he hunched over with his arms grasping the sides of his head in obvious pain.

“Harry!” I scream as I crawl speedily over to him and place my hand on his shoulder.

“ARHHH!” He cried out in a deeply disturbing voice that was animalistic in nature. Like the wildest of beasts roaring in pain and anger. I flinched away from him at his wail of agony but I reaffirm my courage and place both my hands on his shoulders and try to get him to tell me what is wrong. It’s futile I know but I don’t know what else to do. His screams aren’t even human anymore, what can I do to fix that!

I’m not prepared though to be blown back in an explosion of soft black.

I slowly open my eyes, unsure if I had lost consciousness. I’m very disoriented as I look around. I find myself somewhere on the other side of the green house. I’m covered in black feathers... the entire

room is layered by stuff. I wonder where it all came from but then my eyes focus on the patch of grass which is clear of it... like a bomb had gone off, a 6 foot radius is clear of the debris and I look at the slumped form of Harry at its centre.

I dare not make a noise as I run over... My arms quiver as I reach out to touch him not in fear of him, but in fear of the state I will find him in. I place my hands on him and yelp as I pull my hands back. He feels like he had been boiled, his flesh burns me at the touch. I reach out again and ignore the scalding as I place my fingers over his neck. I'm not even sure I would recognize a pulse if I felt it. But luckily a distinct throbbing convinces me he is alive.

I turn him over and try to stifle my gasp as I see the amount of blood he had been lying in. He was lucky to not have drowned to death. His face is smeared with the red fluid and I pat his cheeks while whispering his name... he does not stir. I call louder, and basically slap him, but he is unresponsive. Desperate, I run to the balcony and ignite a stream of red sparks over out locations trying to signal my distress. I can't be sure anyone saw it though... Casting a sonorous, I Try and yell "HELP!" but even I know the spell is not strong enough to carry my voice that distance.

Almost mechanically I rush back inside and grab the invisibility cloak and map. I activate it and desperately search for filch or Snape, hoping that they are somewhere around. I curse as No one wanders the halls. Although I see Madame Pomfrey has quarters within the hospital wing.

Quickly coming to a decision I grasp Harry's things, which include his wand as it had dropped a few meters away in the explosion. I grab a handful of feathers, and I whip out my wand and cast a mobilicorpus. My voice hitches at the corpus part but I am firm in my casting and watch as Harry's body lifts up from the ground like some unholy manikin, or puppet. Blood dripping from his face.

Turning away, I use Harry's wand and open up the passage.

I lead Harry down, the spell forcing me to move slowly, lest I loose control of his body and drop him. I growl in frustration as I see the

long tunnel back to Hogwarts. I know it's a shorter distance than what I would have to travel if I were to use a different method but I don't care as to me it seems to lead on for eternity.

I'm basically speed walking as I pull Harry along. The Dripping driving me insane, as I finally reach the u-turn. Now heading in the other direction... Harry's body is starting to become harder to control... I realize it has something to do with Harry's natural magic fighting the foreign spell. Professor Flitwick had warned us about this when he taught us the spell. But he had made it sound like it would take hours, not minutes.

Either way, I was relieved to finally make it to the other fountain. Quickly tapping the correct stone, I agonized as I waited for the staircase to lower.

Not bothering to keep quiet I dragged Harry to the hospital wing while calling out Madame Pomfrey's name. I had not even reached for the doors before they were pulled open to reveal the rapidly paling mediwitch as she spots her soon to be patient.

"Harry won't wake up..." I inform her desperately. I just now notice that I'm crying... I haven't cried in forever...

The woman doesn't waste a second as she casts her own mobilicorpus and quickly drags Harry into the hospital wing and onto a bed.

She asks me "What happened?" While waving her wand about as if she were conducting an infinitely complex orchestra.

"We were sitting and talking, he hadn't eaten anything yet, he said Halloweens were never good for him, then his scar started to bleed, his eyes turned snake like, and his head hurt. Then he screamed... It wasn't a normal scream... I didn't like that scream..." I babble... I know I'm babbling but I can't stop.

"Ms. Lovegood, Luna! Go to my office and floo the headmaster, tell him what happened." She demands me. I don't even question it as I rush into her office and spot the flower pot filled with the powder.

I for a moment pause and wonder where I'm supposed to call, before I desperately just call out Albus Dumbledore. And stick my head in the now green flames.

The world spins and I find myself facing a mahogany desk in a large circular room. I waste no time, as I scream.

"Professor!" I call out in a panic, demanding his presence at once.

He does not leave me waiting as moments later he is in the office.

"Ms. Lovegood, what is the matter?" he asks me worriedly.

"Harry's head is bleeding and he exploded in black feathers and now he won't wake up... come quick, the hospital wing!" I inform him. As I pull my head away and head toward the Harry and the mediwitch. She is still waving her wand around like a mad woman, every now and then spells wash over his body, but he does not stir.

Madame Pomfrey does not notice me or does not care, as she continues to work.

Suddenly the robed form of the headmaster rushed into the room from the office and demands an update as he joins in the crazed wand waving... Madame Pomfrey says a few phrases, like chaotic build-up, unstable cycles, need to stabilize channels. I don't understand a word she says as I step back until I find myself leaning against the opposite hospital bed. I grasp at Harry's wand tightly, it's a wonder it didn't crack under the strain I placed on it.

I stood there the rest of the night watching as the headmaster and mediwitch worked tirelessly over the disturbingly still form of Harry potter. The Boy-I-Liked.

AN: Ok this chapter took a while, finals and classes have been taking up my time. Also I admit to being slightly lazy, but I mainly blame this chapter being so hard to write. I have a couple different versions of this chapter from other perspectives but I figure this one was the best.

I'd like to point out to everyone; the offness Luna described was Harry's personality mingling with Voldemorts all through out the night. It was a off on thing so some of the night he was himself. The part with Cho he was himself in his entirety. But otherwise any instance Harry was acting a bit more confidant or sly, that was the Voldemort Harry mix.

But unlike last time with the Dursley's he is displaying some of Voldemorts more Slytherin attributes, like craftiness(the way to discourage people to join the D.A.), confidence (the kiss and flirting).

To clear any confusion up if some of you didn't get it. Voldemort just performed another ritual. The last one had left Harry significantly more powerful, but dead with out resurrection.

Now I think you guys can see why I explained away so many of the secrets earlier. It's a whole new ball game. And notice that for once in the story, the black feathers are now real... that's significant.

Alright I look forward to your opinions. Let me know what you think.

Chapter 16 – Hi, I'm Neville, I kick ass!

“He’s loosing... critical to...”

“Get the ...”

‘Huh?’

“Mrs Lovegood, you should...”

“... Is Harry alright...chicken.”

‘...Chicken?’

‘Broken sentences... strange voices...’

“Honestly, how can he end up in my wing so often... You’d think he was cursed... I should look into that.”

‘Madame Pomfrey...? Damn.’

‘I’m unconscious.’

‘...wait... I can think... that must mean I’m awake.’

‘... Why am I not more excited by that...?’

“I think I will engrave this bed... Should I label it with his initials... or maybe his full name? Maybe I can put a restraining field on it... oh this is exciting... no more fleeing.”

‘There’s the reason...’

‘I always hoped she wouldn’t think of that... Maybe I should look into that whole curse thing myself.’ I wondered to myself.

Hearing a soft smattering of feet walking away, I opened my right eye a smidgen.

The room was blurred and bright, but as far as I could tell... empty.

Opening the other eye, I tried to squint, but I couldn't focus on any one object, let alone my glasses.

'Damn, I am so blind; I might as well wear two eye patches.'

I amused myself for a moment by picturing myself in pirate gear, and a peg leg like Moody's. When I imagined myself let out a healthy 'Yarr!'... well I decided I needed to stop that line of thought, lest I need to ponder my mental state.

I was feeling okay, except maybe a little itchy... I could feel my fingers, so I still had those at least. And by the sensation of chilled feet, I knew I at least had all my limbs intact. Honestly I was feeling pretty okay. Better than Ok... I felt like I could train with Oliver wood, Sir, and the DA, all at once, and still have enough energy to attend all my classes.

That was ignoring the itching though... I tried to scratch my back but I just couldn't reach. There was something familiar about it now that I thought about it...

I had felt itchy there before...

Flashes of blood, black feathers, screams of agony, and jade snake eyes startled me as I recalled the significance of the spot.

Retracting my arms, as I didn't feel like scratching that particular itch, I tried to recall what brought me here in the first place.

'I was... Ginny... We were arguing...?' I recalled.

'That was after meeting with Luna... She said that Ginny wanted to see me...'

'I ...She ... she stole the marauders map!' I fumed.

... ..

I had walked into Gryffindor tower trying to find the littlest Weasley only to find her glaring at me from the couch. Confused but curious, I approached her.

“What’s up Ginny?” I asked warily, taking note of the angry scowl...

Ginny stared at me for a moment. An ire reminiscent of her mothers, reserved for the twins at their worst, danced behind her eyes. My hackles rose, if only to prepare myself for what was going to prove to be a very upsetting conversation.

“Where were you...?” It wasn’t a polite curiosity quenching question. It was a demand for an answer. I wanted to Growl, something I had picked up from somewhere, but let it slide as I chose to see where this was going.

“In, the room of requirement.” I said with some edge to my voice. I was still going to remind the girl that I wasn’t to be pushed around. I wasn’t a total push over after all.

The message was received, if the flash of her eyes were any indication. She felt challenged and she wanted to prove her worth.

The entire situation was reminiscent of a pair of wolves demanding leadership of a pack. None of the British civility and propriety here, just animalistic intent.

Only... with words.

Ginny scoffed sardonically at his reply.

“I was looking for you...” She said with anger laced between false sweetness.

“I know, that’s why I’m here. But you don’t seem like you want to talk right now...” I said with a raised eyebrow and quirked lip. I imagined that my expression looked very similar to Snapes when looking on expired newt eyes.

“Who were you with?” She demanded rising to the unspoken challenge in a standing position, so she could stare me in the eye. She failed as the height difference alone was mocking her. I couldn’t understand why I ever thought the girl formidable.

“In all fairness, I don’t see what business it is of yours.” I replied back as politely as I could. ‘Really... the nerve of the girl.’

Her eyes flashed once more. I got the impression that she usually got her way in these matters. “You were with her... weren’t you?” She accused.

I raised his eye brow curiously...

‘Lucky guess.’ I reasoned.

I had not been ignorant to the increasing animosity the littlest Weasley held for Luna. I had chosen not to intrude on the matter, but even the simplest of fools would not have missed the glares sent at the kind blonde.

“Her?” I asked.

“You, know who I am talking about...” She harshly whispered. I momentarily wondered whether the girl had retained any parseltongue abilities as the entire sentence came out as little more than a hiss.

“Even if I did... I repeat. What business is it of yours?” I reiterated.

“Don’t try and hide it, I know! While I’ve been looking for you all day, you’ve been having it up with the Loon!” She whispered angrily.

Something in my expression must have indicated my anger as the girl flinched back away from me, as my anger had flared at the name.

“Do. Not. Call. Her. That!” I whisper darkly at her, while taking a threatening step towards her. I took pleasure in the fact that she took an involuntary step back and trapped as she was pressed against the couch.

The girl's ire reappeared like Uncle Vernon's as she ignored the very real threat in front of her.

"Don't try and change the subject. What have you been doing with her, in that room?" She accused as if I had had a sordid affair with the girl.

"How many times do I have to tell you, It's none of your business, and how would you know I was with Luna at all?!" I asked.

I realized I didn't want to be arguing right now... or ever.

I was having a nice time just moments ago. But I wasn't willing to bow out anymore... I wasn't willing to let people walk all over me anymore. No more, malleable good little Potter. If some one want's something from me, they better be willing to get it from me in the way I wanted to give it. Or risk not getting it at all.

If Sirius's death had done anything, it had made me question everything. Enter teenage rebellion... let them think what they will.

"I saw you; you and her have been in that room for over an hour, don't try and deny it." She spat at me. Really it's like we were dating or something. I was thankful that the common room was bare, as rumours would have surely spread that me and Ginny were dating, and Luna was my mistress on the side.

'And after that blasted article earlier... oh that would have been just lovely.'

"What do you mean you..."

'I imagine this is the point that Ginny had started to realize she might have been in the wrong.'

There on the side of the table held down by a steaming mug of coffee, and three other books was an unfurled map. A very familiar unfurled Map.

“... Where did you get my map from?” I yelled at her as I pushed her aside to grab the priceless personal possession.

“I...” ‘Oh now she’s sorry, now that blasted Weasley anger was abated. Now that she realizes that she’s in trouble, of course.’

“This was in my Trunk... This was in my locked trunk... this was in my locked trunk in my quarters.” I informed her with anger as I pushed the books aside... but stopped as I realized that they were mine as well.

Remus's text books I had left behind for Ron to study from. The books I had not even let Hermione see yet. The book with Sirius's writing, with Remus's notes, with James potters unfunny but infinitely treasured dirty limericks. And here they were used to keep the map of my fathers open to spy on me. I was angry.

“Where did you get this?” I yelled at her. I already knew but I wanted her to say it.

‘Oh she flinched’... there was a time that I would have been ashamed of that, making a girl flinch, but that was not the case anymore.

“I’m sorry Harry... I”

“Where...” I demanded.

“I was just looking for you, and I didn’t think...”

“Where!?” I demanded dangerously.

“... In your trunk.” She finally admitted while looking away.

“What gave you the right to use my map, or go through my things?” My voice was quieter than usual. It did not reach levels that would indicate my true anger. But it was deadly in its own right.

Just like Uncle Vernon, I watched as false indignation swelled within her.

“Don’t take that tone with me, Harry Potter. That was the twins long before they gave it to you... Why I have... I have just as much right to it as you do...” She blustered bravely.

I could only stare at the girl in incredulousness. ‘This was how she defended herself... Really?’

“Let me get this straight... you steal my map, you spy on me... you go through my things... and you tell me you have every right to the map my Godfather, my FATHER made just because the twins swiped it from Filch first!” I honestly don’t think I’ve ever been so angry. I think I might have been willing to forgive if it wasn’t for the fact that she tried to turn it around on me. That was what broke the camels back.

She didn’t say anything... That may have been the smartest thing she did.

I tried to reign in my snarl of anger as I folded the still active map and placed it gently in my backpack, packed up the books, and turned to face the girl.

“Don’t, ever... come near me or anything I own... Is that clear?” I demanded.

She didn’t say anything but the silence spoke volumes. I strolled upstairs to check for any other missing artefacts, and placed every single locking charm I had ever learnt on my trunk and started working on a very crude, but temporary locking scheme with my runes book.

... ..

The anger re-woke in me, I tried to reign in my thoughts and move on... that incident had taxed my emotions; I had spent the rest of the evening channelling my anger into the training sessions where I took pleasure in trying to hurt my instructor. He had taken it in stride, and started sending more damaging and painful curses at me. As barbaric as it may seem, that had calmed me down quite a bit. Though I

feared the intensity our training sessions would take now that I had upped the standard.

‘After that, everything was a blur... I awoke and did something; it was kind of vague...’

‘I sort of remember coming up with an idea for getting me out of the D.A ...?’

‘The D.A.! I remember; I attacked everyone. Why did I do that...?’

‘Oh Right... it kind of worked; Smith certainly didn’t want to be there so much anymore. Susan has a horse Patronus... Cho....’

‘Oh god... I can’t believe I told her...’ I felt my cheeks flame up at the idea of revealing such a personal thing to my ex. That part of the night was very clear.

‘Afterwards, me and Luna... we... we went to the green house...’ It was hard to remember. It was like my mind was shoved into a blender. I wasn’t in pain, but I was so disoriented. I ...

‘Another ritual!’ I remembered. ‘Voldemort performed another ritual.’ Everything else was a lost cause as if I had not even been alive for the rest of it. That might have just been the case too.

‘I was in the greenhouse and Voldemort did another ritual... how did I get back here?’ I wondered. ‘Where was Luna for that matter?’

Suddenly I felt cold metal placed in my left hand, looking over, I saw a blurry pair of wire rimmed glasses. ‘Where did they come from?’

Putting them on and letting the room finally come into focus, I took in the bright but early morning light the sun provided me.

The room was lit with it. It was at that perfect angle that everything seemed alive and fresh.

‘It would have been nice to have watched the sun rise like last time.’ I lamented.

“Harry?” A voice asked me. I whipped my head around and spotted...nothing?

“Are you ok?” Luna’s voice asked me.

“Luna...?” I asked.

“Im hmm” she answered affirmatively.

“I can’t see you?” I asked dumbly. Invisibility cloak, I reminded myself.

“Oh right...” I watched as she shimmered into existence as she looked sheepishly at me with wet eyes and a dreamy smile. I tried not to imagine why the eyes were wet. I also tried not to take a little pleasure in the fact that the eyes were wet because of me. It was a nice feeling to be cared for, even though I felt distinctly uncomfortable because of the same thought.

“Madame Pomfrey told me to go... I didn’t want to...” She explained.

I smiled at her. It might have seemed a little hypocritical of me to be fine with Luna using my cloak and to freak out over Ginny, but there were definitely differences in the situations in question.

“I hope you don’t mind... oh here...” she proceeded to pull objects out of her pockets... my map for one, some blades of grass, a few nuts and sickles, my wand, and ... feathers?

She then proceeded to divide up the things, the nuts and sickles towards her, the blades of grass also, but my own things and the feathers were pushed towards me.

I looked at the girl strangely. “Why are you giving me feathers...?” I asked.

“They feel like they belong to you...” she answered mysteriously.

“What do you mean?” I asked.

"They came from you last night..." She stated.

"They did?" I asked.

"Yup..." she said resolutely.

"Right..." I replied. "Thanks then..." I said with a smile.

"What happened?" She asked.

"Ah, good question." I replied back. A part of me didn't want to tell her. Another part of me reminded myself that it must have been her to get me back here, and judging from last time, I might not have been in a very good state.

She certainly deserved an answer, but what was I to tell her.

So far there had been a lot of secrets I was being entrusted to keep. Then again, a lot of those secrets I have been the one to want to keep them secret. This was very confusing.

Opening and closing my mouth, I finally said. "Sometimes when Voldemort does things, things happen to me. I don't really know the specifics yet, but that's what happened last night." There yeah go... vague enough to answer the question, but not tell her about the specifics.

I honestly just didn't want her to worry too much about me.

She looked at me for a moment contemplating my words.

"Voldemort did a ritual and you got affected?" She asked me.

How the hell did she figure that out from 'Voldemort sometimes does things?'

"Yeah... how you figure that out?" I asked.

She looked at me as if not really seeing me. "Halloween is an important date; it's an important date to him and you... rituals work better when done within important dates... it makes sense."

"How do you know that?" I asked, impressed. Some how I don't think rituals are that common judging from Ron's reaction to the news.

"Mum used to talk about them. She was a researcher." She replied.

Other than answer my question; the fact that she revealed that about her mother... it seemed significant. I feel like it took some doing for her to admit it.

"Oh; well no wonder you're a Ravenclaw ..." I fake pouted, to lighten the mood. It worked as an amused smile graced her face.

"Indeed, brilliance does seem to have been passed on to you Ms. Lovegood." A grandfatherly voice answered. I was glad it wasn't just me that snapped my neck to look at the headmaster at the foot of my bed. 'How the hell does he do that?'

"Headmaster..." I answered back in shock as I tried to seat myself a little higher in my bed.

Something about lying in a bed in front of the most powerful wizard known... it left me feeling very self-conscious.

Luna for that matter seemed to be blushing, as if caught out of bounds. Which in a way, she was.

"Do not fret Ms. Lovegood; it has become quite the challenge to outwit Madame Pomfrey. I commend you on finding a way." He complimented.

"Thank you sir..." She answered back politely while trying not to look him in the eye.

"Hello sir..." I greeted properly; now that I was at least sitting with my back to the bed frame.

"Back to sir, are we... shame. How are you feeling Harry." He asked

"Fine... Really, I feel great." I defended at his and Luna's joint quirked eyes.

"Well I suppose that is all we can hope for. Judging by Ms. Lovegoods explanation, I take it you chose to inform her of what has transpired." He asked approvingly.

"She actually figured it out but yeah, she knows." I reply back. I make sure to make my tone sound like I was fine with it... which I was. I realized we were talking about her while she was standing not a foot away. I personally hate having others talk about me as if I wasn't there.

"I take it you have questions for me." Dumbledore stated.

"Umm... I should, give me a minute." I answer honestly. I am still trying to regain my bearings so a lot of my questions are still forming.

He laughed abruptly at my answer... "Yes, I assume you would. How about I explain what I have ascertained." Dumbledore offered.

He was about to start, but I was distracted as I spotted Luna.

I watched as she started to put her grass and Knuts in her robe pockets again. I thought she was trying to leave and give me my privacy as I talked with Dumbledore.

I appreciated that; not even Ron or Hermione gave me that consideration. Ron is understandably curious so I understand that. Hermione seemed to believe she had a right to all information about me. In a way she was like Aunt Petunia, with her digging into others personal lives. It had served me well when trying to oust the next Death Eater Professor or digging up dirt on prying reporters... but it was certainly annoying when the microscope was directed at oneself.

For those reasons and more, I felt like letting Luna stay. I suppose just knowing that she was willing to give me that privacy... I felt less like hiding it from her.

"I wouldn't mind if you stayed Luna... unless you have some place to be that is." I offered. Luna looked up from gathering her things and stared me in the eye.

'He wants me to be here...' a bright voice whispered within my head. I realize what that flash was immediately.

It's a bit odd to have it happen right away and know where it came from now. I can't help the blush that crosses my face at knowing how happy it made her to be wanted, and included.

"Thank you Harry." She said dreamily with a smile as she took a tentative seat on the bed at my side. She did a remarkable job of keeping the emotion I know she is feeling out of her voice and expression.

I turn to look at the headmaster who was practically blinding me with that infernal knowing twinkle of his.

"Yes, well a ritual did indeed take place last night; I received reports not long after from the order that they detected similar readings as the last. While you have been asleep, I ran some diagnostic spells and it appears that the Evolutionary Blocks I mentioned earlier... they have reduced significantly. The ritual was much stronger than the last." He said cautiously.

I think I understood what he was truly saying. It was a wonder I survived.

"What kind of evolutionary blocks were removed this time?" I asked.

I had done some reading on the subject in what little spare time I had. I discovered that like the spherical pie chart, evolutionary blocks were separated by category of magic and energy. They were the indicators of limits and every person had an unknown number of redundant blocks to back up the ones that kept the magic in check.

Like a system of dams keeping a mass of water in check. If one were to collapse a series of others would be there to keep them in check. But the added distance the water covered was significant.

It was an imperfect metaphor, but it explained the gist of the matter.

The last bar chart indicated that a significant number had been removed; to have more removed... it was unheard of. Or at least as far as I knew

"These were actual 'evolutionary' Evolutionary Blocks that were removed." Dumbledore stated. I imagine my eyes widened slightly at that. I had spent a little more time on this area of the subject.

These blocks, were actual 'blocks'. They limited a person in terms of traits and abilities. Evolution was apparently a two way streak as every now and then, a species developed inhibiting blocks that limited it in terms of lifespan, skill, mental prowess, anything and everything. After all, evolution was not some living entity that could pick and choose the best traits to be passed on and eliminate the rest; It was a series of random events that lead to the rise and fall of every living thing on the planet.

Where was the proof for such a statement; one might ask.

Baldness was Hereditary... I laughed when I read that. I laughed harder when I showed Ron. He did not take kindly to the fact that he might lose his precious Hair.

"I don't know what will happen to you, but it will depend upon you as much as it will the ritual magic's." Dumbledore explained.

"Oh..." I replied. Why is it whenever he tries to explain something to me all I ever get is more questions and a headache?

"Professor Dumbledore?" Luna asked.

I turn to look at the girl in question.

"Yes my dear?" Dumbledore asked.

“What did the feathers mean?”

Good question... I had feathers... the only time I ever saw those were in the dream and the room of requirement.

“Feathers...?” He asked.

I pulled one up to show him.

His eyes widened slightly at the sight of them. “Are these what you saw in the room of requirement Harry?” he asked me.

I nodded an affirmative.

“I see... would you mind if I took these, I would like to experiment on them.” He asked.

“That should be fine... I can get you more Harry.” Luna informed us.

“More?” I and Dumbledore asked in confusion.

“The room was filled with them.” She replied back. That was intriguing to me. I had assumed she had to scrounge around for them.

“Where exactly were you if I may ask.” Dumbledore questioned.

‘Uh oh...’

It’s not like we did anything wrong, but I suddenly realized that this might be considered out of the castle. I had promised to stay inside the castle and not to sneak out. Plus I really did not want to give away the location of the green house, even though it was his school technically; I liked the idea of keeping it a secret.

Luna looked down contritely, I think she was about to answer for me but It was me who led her there in the first place; I decided I should at least be the one to tell Dumbledore.

I placed my hand on her shoulder to indicate I would explain.

“Me and Luna... we went to a green house that is connected to the school through a tunnel in the courtyard.” I answered.

Dumbledore’s eye’s raised. “How on earth did you find the Garden?” He asked. He wasn’t angry, just surprised. I took that as a good sign.

“It’s on the map.” I said indicating a parchment he had only seen at the end of my fourth year.

“Ah... your farther and friends were quite thorough in there investigations of the school.” Dumbledore said impressed. I let a relieved breath escape my lips as that indicated he was fine with it.

“That is a forgotten teacher retreat. Over the years the Headmasters have been using it as a getaway. There is another entrance to the garden within my chambers and I sometimes like to take in the view as it were...” a strange look crossed his face and then he came to some kind of realization.

Staring at me with an accusatory frown... “It was you who finished off all the berries.” He accused.

I couldn’t help the contrite smile that crossed my face as he scolded us of berry theft. It was too surreal.

Here I was, laying in a hospital bed, sitting beside the girl I liked, discussing ritual magic, evolutionary theory, and filched raspberries with Albus ‘Freaking’ Dumbledore. My life was definitely not normal.

... ..

In the end, Dumbledore welcomed us to continue using the garden, under the provision that we save him some berries next time. I had been allowed to leave the hospital wing sooner than usual, as Dumbledore pulled some strings with his headmaster and chief warlock card. It did not let me escape a full work over but I at least did not have to spend the rest of the day, or week, in the hospital wing.

I finally escaped to meet with a curious Ron, who asked about my whereabouts, only to have to be silenced as I whispered to him a summary of what happened, sans mention of the garden. I still wanted to keep that a secret.

Even though the headmaster turned out to have known about it, it only added to the gardens allure. There was a certain danger to having the headmaster a door away that I enjoyed.

I was a thrill seeker, after all.

I was currently trying to find something to do between now and my appointment with the headmaster. He felt it was more important now than ever to continue the mental exercises. I had not had much success, but I had managed to sense an indistinct throb in my chest that might have been my magic. It was an intoxicating sensation to be able to discover the substance within me that defined so much of my life. Tiring but intoxicating.

Luna had begged off spending the rest of the day with me, claiming that she had a potions exam she had to study for on Monday; Ron and Hermione claimed the same. I was under no such constrictions, although I suppose it wouldn't have cost me anything to test myself in all the potions I had already done.

Just as I was about to turn around and head back inside the castle to do just that, I was stopped by a hiss.

"Why. Won't. You. Shut. Up!" Each word was followed by slight thumping noise.

Walking around a corner I found myself staring at Parvarti and a familiar serpent.

"You're right, He was slime. I mean who wears a chequered shirt to a first date." She confirmed to the snake, which looked for all the world like it was agreeing as it swung its head up and down fervently. Where, in reality, it was trying to knock itself unconscious as it moaned its plight.

"I don't know why people don't like snakes... your great listeners... I tried... Harry!" Parvarti screamed in jubilation upon spotting me.

"Hi?" I said unsurely as she rushed towards me.

"I'm so glad you're here... Tell me what he's saying." She demanded as she sat me on a log by the cage of the large Occamy that was still here.

"I thought he was supposed to be gone by now." I questioned in confusion.

"Oh, Hagrid said, they didn't have room in the pens to keep him; so they asked him to keep him..." Parvarti said distractedly wanting Harry to translate right away.

"Monkey! I demand you tell your female to leave me alone." It ordered. I could hear the desperation in its voice even though it tried to order me to do its bidding.

"And why would I do that...?" I asked.

"Because I command you to, you tail-less prime mate!" It ordered.

"What did it say?" Parvarti demanded excitedly.

"Tell her to shut her fangless mouth before I bite her tongue out. I will not listen to her prattle on about this Jeremy person one moment longer!" The snake ordered.

"He say's he agrees with you completely about some bloke named Jeremy... He want's you to tell him more. He finds you excellent company." Harry said with a grin toward Parvarti. She practically swooned.

"Oh Shirley... You're the best!" She cried out happily, while starting a new tail about how lavender kept using her midnight blue mascara with out asking.

“Die Monkeys... Die!” It screamed in frustration as it thumped its head on the ground repeatedly.

“He says he loves you...” I barely managed to keep from laughing hysterically at the hiss of rage.

I never enjoyed listening to girl talk as much as I did then... Shirley was definitely going to prove fun.

... ..

“What has you so amused Harry?” Dumbledore asked as I sat myself in a comfy chair opposite him in his office.

“You know the Occamy Hagrid has?” I asked.

“I do... I understand you translated for him...” Dumbledore stared at me shrewdly, as I had practically snorted as he referred to my supposed translating.

“Have you and he formed a bond?” He asked curiously.

“You could say that... It informed me and Parvarti that it wanted to kill us slowly and painfully... and one day, it would strip the flesh from our bones.” I told him.

I thought that he seemed quite alarmed by the news.

“I do not see the humour in the ...”

“I told Parvarti that it wanted to hear more tips on how to apply make up, and what colors went well with fuchsia.” I explained.

Dumbledore appeared stunned for a moment, but I got a few snorts from headmasters of yore.

“Are you sure it is wise to antagonize the snake...” He warned. His cautioning was ruined slightly by the wicked smile that graced his face.

“Probably not, but I don’t intend to ever get in the cage so I’m not worried.” I said cockily. I put the warning aside though to think on later. It wasn’t bad advice, but I wasn’t too worried.

“Yes... well, be cautious. Shall we.” He asked.

I nodded and let him guide me in the familiar calming techniques. Sooner than last time, I started to enter a trance like state.

“Now Harry... I want you to search for your magic. It should be easier to find, it beats a rhythm unique to you and you alone, when you find it... lock on to it.” Dumbledore instructed me in a hypnotic voice.

Personally... I didn’t much care. The trance I was in was like a constant imperious like state. Except with out the arguing voices demanding I follow its will alone.

With my eyes still closed I started to probe my being for any kind of rhythm I could find... it was harder to do, with out breaking out of my trance like state. Dumbledore had informed me it was key to be in this state for the exercise.

Slowly my perception of the room started to change; it was getting harder to maintain the trance, as new information on magical devices around the walls were pounding on my mind. Dumbledore had explained to me that this was a good sign that I was getting close to my core.

Constantly pushing away information, like tree branches along a trail in a dense forest. I probed my being, training my senses inwards, rather than outwards. I was starting to feel the throb. It was faint but it was there.

It felt like a deep bass string, vibrating to an unknown beat within me. It felt right. That was the only way to describe it. It beat to a rhythm that if I could copy in real life, would be my own personal theme song. My soul sung to this rhythm.

I tried to get closer as I knew I was too far away. I couldn't do it... it was like it needed something to allow me that closeness. I tried to reach out, but the distance remained the same.

There was something I needed to do; I needed to offer it something before it would allow me to grasp it.

"I can't lock on sir..." I informed Dumbledore... I almost lost the connection from speaking. That's a step in the right direction as I had lost the connection last time because I had spoke. I was at least getting better.

"What do you mean Harry." He said soothingly, somehow helping me get a little closer through the soothing tones of his voice, but nowhere close enough to be able to grasp it.

"It won't let me near it... It wants me to give it something first." I answered automatically. I was too deep into the exercise to care at how stupid and strange that sounded. I just knew I needed to offer it something before I could grasp it.

Dumbledore's voice remained silent for a few moments as I allowed myself to listen to the rhythm of the throb. It felt like it was behind my heart... I knew it wasn't really, but it felt central in positioning. It was like how we imagined we felt emotions like love and sorrow from the chest, even though the brain is actually what did the work.

"I would advise that you offer it emotion. Consider your Patronus... remember your happiest memories... focus them on the pulse." He advised.

I considered his words as they washed over me... some of the strongest magic's required emotions to work... why not this.

Slowly, I gathered as many happy thoughts I could, remembering my happiest moments. My pride in Ron for such a quick understanding of runes, my happiest memories of Hermione as she stood by my side during thick and thin, Mrs. Weasley's loving hand in raising me, Remus's presentation of my own personal bedroom, the night I spent

with Luna in the Garden and on the grass letting my cares wash away with raindrops and sun rays.

I gathered these emotions and memories together... I compressed them and nudged them towards my core...

It was instantaneous as there was no real distance to traverse. I felt the collision, I felt the package I had sent get probed.

I felt... it get rejected. I felt as I was denied access.

My trance started to deteriorate. I tried to keep it alive but it was gone within moments, leaving me disoriented as the world rushed back in on me.

I opened my eyes to find the curious eyes of my headmaster in front of me.

"It didn't work..." I said glumly.

"Please describe what you sensed." He asked me. I described what I tried to do... he nodded along indicating that is what he would have done. I told him about sending the ball towards my core, and I told him about my sense of being rejected. It was not what my core wanted.

"Do not feel bad Harry. These things happen; we are after all exploring something that has never truly happened before. You can not be expected to have mastered all your skills right away." Dumbledore replied back in comfort.

I knew this, but I felt dejected for my failure.

"I know approximately what level of magic you can safely expel. How about we practice your wandless skills for now. I must admit I am curious to see you perform this feat again." Dumbledore offered with a smile.

I was pretty easy to please I decided; I started to get excited again at the thought of the skill.

I had wondered about my secret power that I supposedly had, that Voldemort lacked. Dumbledore had made it sound like love, but I was a little happier knowing it was more substantial than that. Was it Wandless magic...? Was I to overpower Voldemort with the skill, as he used his Yew wand? Something told me... no.

I felt more like my wandless ability stemmed from this unknown power... it felt like I was only exploring a single aspect of it that in essence, masked its true form.

How I knew this, I may never know... but I was sure I was correct.

But if it wasn't wandless magic... what was it?

It was strange, but after learning the prophecy, and once the words had sunk in... I felt a sort of comfort within there prediction. I bemoan my fate most days of the week, and rightfully so; but the prophecy offered a sort of purpose to my existence that made everything seem right.

Philosophers everywhere contemplated the meaning of their lives and the reason things happened the way they did. I knew. My fate was intertwined with a mad man and I was to be the deciding factor in his continued tyranny. As twisted as it was to draw comfort from it... here I was, doing just that.

I returned my attention to the headmaster as I watched him pull out another orb with three concentric bands around it.

"This is similar to the orb I had you fire in earlier. I have adjusted it so that when it reaches certain magical potencies it will glow separate colors... if it starts to glow yellow, you have expended one quarter of your safe magic. If it glows blue... half. Red is a third, and green is your maximum. For now we shall stop at yellow and proceed from there." Dumbledore informed me.

I agreed readily as I just wanted to try it out.

“Now Harry... How about we try a Lumos? Professor Connelly informed me he taught you spell mining...” Dumbledore asked. I nodded remembering the useful skill.

“Good, for now, try to cast a Lumos within the ball. Verbally.” Dumbledore instructed.

I had reached the point in my training where I need only glance at a room to be able to place a spell within it. Instead of taking about a minute to think up locations, it took me up to 5 seconds. A vast improvement, that left my instructor quite impressed.

Quickly visualizing where I wanted it I cast the spell. “Lumos.” I intoned. Immediately a light lit the inside of the ball. I quickly checked my hand and no wand was in it... I was quite proud.

The ball barely registered any color at all. I could see a swirling silvery substance within the orb though. It was very light and barely there.

“Well done Harry, do you feel any different, any discomfort?” Dumbledore asked as he did a quick wave of his wand over my body doing a quick scan using a spell I recognized. It told the caster the state of a person's health, including magical levels... not a very in-depth scan like other spells but convenient for quick glances, and easy to cast.

“I feel fine. What's the stuff inside the ball?” I asked back as I stared at the ball. It was like transparent floating snow flakes.

“Ahh, yes that Harry, is Magic.” Dumbledore explained.

“What do you mean?” I asked.

“It is magic, at its most natural state; the ball extracted the magic from the spell and captured it.”

I stared at the substance in... disappointment. I had always assumed magic would be some magnificent crystal like glowing substance that

would take my breath away... it was rather plane, a little more extravagant than mist really.

"You appear to be in good health, do you wish to continue?" Dumbledore asked, already knowing I would say yes.

Next he asked me to cast the spell silently. It was actually easier to cast wandless; silent spells that is. He next asked me to mask the spells visibility which was slightly difficult as I had to picture a light spell invisible, but I managed to perform the conundrum eventually. We moved on to more defensive spells. I cast a Protego, again by using the spell mining technique, which I found infinitely useful as I could protect others now using the spell. Something I considered very likely to be needed. After running through the same cycle, I tried casting stupefies, wingardiums, accio's, a slew of more aggressive spells, some prank spells I had learnt, and finally a Patronus. That finally pushed the glow of the orb to a slight bluish yellow hue. Not green but definitely yellowy blue.

After which Dumbledore had me stop and I let him scan my state. He looked on in surprise and re cast the spell.

Quickly changing spells he cast a more thorough spell, and pondered the results.

"It appears I have good news to give you Harry." He said perplexed.

"Professor?" I asked.

"The orb indicates that you have reached quarter saturation, a little over infact. Yet my diagnostic spells indicate you are at one fifth and decreasing." Dumbledore said in slight amazement.

"Sir?" I asked confused. Was the orb not working right?

"A normal witch or wizard will take approximately a day to dissipate the residual magic; you have a much higher rate. Approximately..." He re cast the spell twice within ten seconds... and paused as he did the numbers.

"About 1,000 units per second." He informed me.

"Is that a lot?" I asked.

"Consider it this way. You can cast one stupefy, and it will take you about... 15 seconds for you to be at the same level of saturation you were at before you cast it." Dumbledore explained.

"So... I could just keep casting over and over, and not reach my limit then?" I asked in excitement at the possibility. I had no limits if I understood the man.

"To an extent yes, but if you were to use much more magic demanding spells or to over exert certain spells, then you would reach your limit much quicker... it will become more understandable to you once you master our meditative exercises but until then, please do not try and cast any more spells than you have tonight using your wandless abilities..." he warned.

"Wait... I can use it away from you?" I asked. I thought he asked me not to use the ability unless I was with him.

Dumbledore quirked an eye at me. "Are you telling me you haven't given in to the temptation? I'm sorry Harry; I had assumed you might have indulged once or twice with out telling me. I am quite impressed by your will power; I doubt I would have had such patience at your age." Dumbledore complimented me.

I tried not to feel too pleased by his compliment.

"Never the less, I am allowing you to use it, or I suppose you can say I am no longer frowning upon you using it. I dare say, I can not order you to not use this ability of yours; but I ask that you use it to a minimum and maintain the secrecy we have adhered to. It would not do for the wrong person to get wind of your capabilities, as the wizarding public would not react well to a person who could never be disarmed. Let alone Voldemort." Dumbledore soberly remarked.

I quickly agreed and felt a little pride in the trust Dumbledore was giving me. My illusions that the man was perfect and had all the

answers had been shattered long ago, but I still held him in high regard.

... ..

I was wondering whether I should tell Ron about my ability. He knew I could cast spells wandless, but he believed I could only cast them under the Headmaster's presence so he had not asked me to show him any spells; which I appreciated. But now that I was free to use them, I wondered whether I should show him.

Especially considering I had no intention of showing Hermione.

Hermione knew practically nothing about it. Even Luna knew more on the subject after sitting in on the conversation with the headmaster yesterday morning. If I were to show Ron, I felt like it would just emphasise how little she knew of my life and how much I was hiding from her.

There was a point at which I was maintaining my privacy, and a point when I was just being spiteful... I feared I might have become the latter.

I certainly had every right to keep this a secret, and I certainly had a right to inform who ever I pleased, but my damned guilty conscience was starting to rear its ugly nagging head.

To reveal to Hermione that Ron, and Luna of all people were aware of it before her, it would not go over well.

And really, I didn't want her to know at all. It's not that I didn't trust her, but lately our relationship had been fluctuating too easily. This kind of information felt like it should only be given to those I had a more stable relationship with. In reality I felt more stability with Neville than I did with Hermione. I wasn't about to go and freely tell Neville all my deep dark secrets, but the point was the same.

Deciding to place this on the back burner for now, I walked the halls of Hogwarts. Class had just ended for me, and I was about to grab

my things and head to the Room of Requirement for my usual study sessions when I heard a familiar voice.

“Get off, what’s your problem!”

“You think you can hurt my family like that and get away with it...” An unfamiliar voice asked in anger.

Quickly running around the corner I spotted a ragged Neville who was ducking a punch and walking backwards and away from a slightly familiar Slytherin.

“What the Hell are you talking about?!” He cried in exasperation as the boy charged him.

“Hey!” I called in anger as I ran over with my wand out to help my friend.

The boy turned to look at me but quickly dismissed me and continued to pursue Neville.

“You cost my Farther his eye, you brought shame on my family... I’ll kill you Longbottom!” He raged as he kept trying to hit Neville. I had to hand it to Neville, he sure could duck.

“What the hell are you talking about!” Neville cried in frustration as he sidestepped another punch but trapped himself in a corner.

“Leave Neville alone!” I cried in anger as I ran up to the boy and pushed him aside and into the wall. He grunted but quickly pushed me away and tried to re-chase Neville, who had thankfully gotten out of the corner.

“This doesn’t concern you Potter” he said distractedly as he pursued Neville.

“The hell it doesn’t” I cried in anger as I re-pushed him aside and held him against the wall.

The boy was strong, a seventh year.

As I held him back, I finally got a good look at his face.

“You’re that kid from the Train.” I said in comprehension, remembering the last unknown kid who had been glaring at Neville hatefully that day.

“Put me down Potter.” he demanded. He was very strong. Deciding to call on my magic I used a spell that created pressure to apply force to any object at will. I had been taught it to use to push or punch enemies away, or an alternative to the wingardium as it does not actually cast magic on an object so much as it does the air. I had however used it to hold the boy against the wall as if I had a blanket to wrap around his legs. With a wand of course, as this spell was draining and I didn’t want to risk my health so early on in my spell casting.

I turned to look at Neville who was staring angrily at the boy who had attacked him.

“What’s this all about Neville?” I asked.

“I don’t know, he keeps coming after me.” He huffed as he was winded from the exercise. The boy himself was huffing as well. His dark eyes glinting with malice indicating his stamina would not stop him though.

“Who are you...?” I demanded.

He didn’t answer me. I turned to look at Neville.

“He says his name is Dmitry Macnaire.” Neville said huffily not realizing the significance of the name.

“Macnaire?” I questioned while turning back to look at the boy. He was a handsome fellow, not at all reminiscent to the moustached executioner. I had not even realized the man had children or a family. But why was he...

“What happened to your farther?” I demanded.

His hateful eyes turned on me. "He lost his eye, they don't receive treatment in Azkaban for wounds as they don't want to subject healers to the dementors, and they want the prisoners to die. He lost his eye because of that Bastard. The infection is spreading also... did you know that... The healers told me that more than likely it would follow the nerves back to his brain... it may make him blind in the other eye then... Do you know how shameful that is? The dishonour it will cause our family to have a blind man in the family." He spat in anger. He sounded a little crazed as well, which put me more on edge.

I turned to look at Neville. "Macnaire was the man you saved me from. The one you put Hermione's wand through the eye socket." I informed him. I had assumed he had maybe bruised the man, at most. I had not imagined the man had lost an eye in the encounter. It was deeply unsettling even though he was an enemy at the time.

Neville's face paled, under the realization. Turning to look at the boy, his eyes took on a more sympathetic but still angry look.

"Let him down." He commanded.

I wanted to object but there was an edge to Neville's voice that was not usually there. The same edge that was there in his eyes when he dared me, Ron, and Hermione to make fun of him at St. Mungos a year ago.

Slowly I let him go, while releasing the spell I held him under.

It was not even a second before the boy lunged at Neville. What shocked me more was the fact that Neville lunged first and knocked him back against the wall?

I had never seen Neville behave violently, ever. This was a side to him that never surfaced. I watched as he held him with his forearm against his throat half choking the kid against the wall as he clawed at Neville's arm.

"I know why you're angry now..." he said in a half whisper. The edge was there still.

"I understand that now. But I won't apologize for trying to stay alive that day, or helping out a friend. If you come after me, I will come after you. Is that clear?" He said. The boy stared hatefully at him. I was very unnerved. This was something I could see myself doing or Ron... definitely Ron; but never Neville.

He was very intimidating.

The boy didn't answer.

Neville's arm pushed in further, eliciting a choked gasp.

"Do you understand?" He demanded again.

"Yes..." the boy wheezed with Hate.

Neville stepped back and released the boy. I could see his arms trembling under the agitation he was feeling. He was preparing himself for a fight. To me there was a very definite possibility that one would occur.

And I was right.

The boy suddenly lunged at Neville with a cry of primal anger. I could not have prevented it if I had tried.

The Boy swung a fist and hit Neville in the face. Neville's body swung with the hit as he turned over to his left and away from me. That's what hid his left hook as he sent a punch right back at the boy. Hitting him squarely in the eye.

"Shit..." I cried as I quickly got in-between the two boys and pushed them apart. I honestly wasn't sure who needed to be protected from the other. Normally I would have said it was Neville that needed it, but the two were fairly evenly matched.

“Stop it you two... Do you want a teacher to come and find you fighting?” Honestly I knew neither cared. But I had managed to separate them long enough that they were able to contain their anger.

“This isn’t over Longbottom.” Dmitry warned.

“I know.” Neville said calmly as he swiped blood from his split lip. I was proud to say that Dmitry had a split eyebrow and was guaranteed a shiner later on.

Both boys stared hard at one another before they reached a mutual understanding and walked in separate directions... I was terribly confused but decided to catch up with Neville instead of waiting and watching the two boys walk off.

“What was that...?” I demanded.

Neville was still huffing in exertion and I knew he was coming down from his adrenaline high, I knew that feeling well enough to know what it was like.

Neville avoided looking at me for a moment and I let him answer at his own pace. It was both to let him set the tone of the conversation and also because I clearly did not know the boy as well as I thought I had.

Finally...

“I took away Macnair’s sight. That’s bad for a Pureblood... it’s bad for anyone but purebloods specifically. Their family is disgraced. Sight is very important. To take away any sense from a pureblood is to limit them, to make them less useful, inferior. It reflects badly on the family to allow it. Dmitry wanted revenge. It’s common.” Neville informed me.

I was a little startled that I kind of understood what he meant, but still. I had never anticipated Neville being willing to fight back in such a way, or for such ideals.

Neville continued on... seemingly understanding what I was thinking.

“He challenged me, and if I had not accepted, that shame is passed on to my family. Normally I wouldn’t care, but that would look bad on my parents... upon Gran. I won’t allow that. She holds these views and customs with high regard.” Neville informed me.

He was starting to reach the withdrawal stage. His fists were trembling and he was going to feel slightly weak and jittery now.

I kind of understood that, and it made more sense. But still. I just couldn’t resolve the two Neville’s. The kind boy who avoided confrontations but was loyal to a fault; and the boy who’s anger and violent streak set me on edge. He was a true sleeping dragon.

“I’d appreciate it if you didn’t tell anyone.” He said more calmly. I quickly nodded as I realized I had somehow lost control of my vocal chords and could not utter a word to the boy.

“Thanks... I’ve got to get to the green houses, I’ll see you later.” Neville said. As he started to walk ahead.

Stopping a few steps ahead and turning to look at me with a more familiar smile...

“And thanks for trying to help, it’s nice to know someone has your back.” He smiled and then walked away.

I definitely did not know Neville Longbottom... at all.

AN: Well that was a whopper. Neville definitely is different than previously indicated. I finally revealed my Neville subplot. It was lucky I took a look at my outline otherwise I would have forgotten to write this.

Dmitry Macnaire. Eldest of two sons. Heir to the Macnaire name although it’s not as prestigious as say Potter or Malfoy. It’s still a pureblood family. The pureblood’s have their own honour system, consider it like some parts of the world where traditions and beliefs overrule law, and even though the judicial system frowns on such actions, it does very little to curb it from happening. That’s what I was going for here.

The purebloods view deformity and disabilities as shameful. I came to this decision as I looked at how they view muggles. They value class and hierarchy. But since magic is more a physical attribute than say wealth and influence, the pureblood hierarchy is based slightly on how fit its representatives are. So Magical Power is a big one, then money, then influence, blood purity, and finally health. People like Macnaire who aren't that wealthy or that influential, but only really have magic and their health. They are fairly low. To go lower, it's an insult to them.

I hope that made sense. Neville isn't so much fighting for himself now. He's fighting because he believes his parents valued that system based on his Gran. As she is a believer. They have Magical prowess from Neville's father, a fair bit of influence due to their name and such, and all the rest of that stuff.

For Dmitry, It's kind of like a rich and privileged kid coming along to his orphanage and burning down their Christmas tree and then going off to Toys R Us. You'd get mad. Even though Neville had a very good reason to defend himself and Harry. The tree is still burnt and the orphans still want the blood of the arsonist.

Harry's core isn't activated by happy memories or emotions... I honestly hate that cliché.

Everything has to revolve around happy memories and emotions in most fanfiction. No more. This is my stand. Plus it makes more sense for what I need Harry's true power to be useful for.

The snake is back... Off and on He will make an appearance. Though he won't always be the victim of Harry's taunts. But mainly he is here for comic relief... if you can call it that.

Chapter 17 – The Armies of BOB!

“Hey... Whatever happened to those Muggles from the sorting ceremony?” Ron suddenly asked as we were studying.

Currently, we were all enjoying a reprieve from Care of magical creatures due to the Niffler escape from Hagrid’s third year class.

Hermione, being who she was, demanded we not laze about as we had originally planned, and take the time to review. Ron and I had at least managed to keep her from dragging us to the library, as we currently sat along the benches in the courtyard.

Being the start of November, the weather had taken a downwards spiral into the more brisk and dreary cloud ridden style that left the student body both lethargic, and moody; but today, it was unusually bright, and the temperature, wonderfully mild.

Such a day could not be wasted, so here we sat, opposite the entrance to the garden, overlooking the lake.

Trapped by books and stone benches that had a slight mossy growth along the legs, and along the stone arches that made up the courtyard; we sat knee deep in our notes on Magical creatures.

“That’s a good question... didn’t Dumbledore say they would sit in on our classes?” I asked.

I noticed Hermione sported a half perplexed half dismissive frown as she stared down her notes.

“He probably changed his mind and sent them away.” Hermione said distractedly as she snatched one of my notes on the cleptrapper from last week to compare to her own.

“Why would he send them away...?” Ron asked.

“They probably overstepped their bounds or Malfoy and some of the purebloods made enough of a fuss that he was forced to kick them out...” Hermione remarked.

“Harry, why do you have the male cleptrapper marked as an omnivore, it’s clearly a carnivore.” She questioned. I looked over and spotted the report sheet on the creature we had studied.

A strange mix between a dog, seal, and fire crab, that scuttled around on 4 legs attached to a seal body under a jewelled tortoise shell that breathed fire from its dog like head.

Hagrid had handed us all a questionnaire, asking us to describe what its qualities probably were from what we observed. Questions like ‘most likely foods eaten’, ‘mating habits’, ‘temperament’... it was actually a good exercise, compared to feeding flobber worm’s lettuce day in and out.

“It ate a steak right in front of us.” Hermione reminded me.

“Yes, but the teeth, they were flatter, like ours, that indicates it could also eat plants, see...” I took the time to point out the crude drawing of the teeth along the side of the page. I definitely had little talent in the arts, as my drawing looked more like a constipated mutant goldfish trapped under a bowl, rather than a ... whatever it was.

“... And why would Dumbledore get rid of the muggles, he never lets what the parent’s have to say, or the ministry for that matter, change his teaching staff. If he did, Snape would have been gone his first week on the job.” I remarked.

As annoying as I assumed having parents complain about things, Dumbledore always seemed to have veto power to keep whoever he wished on staff. The only reason Umbridge was allowed on was because he could not find anyone to take up the position in her stead.

Hermione huffed in frustration and looked away from her papers. “Honestly, what about Remus... He had to leave because everyone found out about him being a werewolf.” Hermione reminded us all.

“Correction, Remus quit pre-emptively, Dumbledore never fired him. If he had stayed I’m sure Remus could have stayed on.” I corrected her.

“Yeah... and he let Hagrid stay, he’s a half giant. That’s much worse in the wizarding world, Werewolves are at least normal most of the time, a giant is a giant all the time.” Ron pointed out. “Not that there’s anything wrong with Hagrid of course...” Ron said absentmindedly.

Hermione huffed once more in exasperation, whispered ‘honestly’ to herself, but didn’t argue the matter.

“Well fine then, if you’re such geniuses, you tell me. Where did the muggle’s go?” She challenged.

“Uhh...” he stammered.

“...I asked you first!” He finally proclaimed; victorious, that he had wheedled his way out of answering.

Hermione huffed once more, but let a smile play across her face as she looked away.

‘That’s was more like it.’ I thought.

Hermione had started to take a much more calm out look over the past few days. She was still study crazy, and Ron and she argued just as frequently; but there was less hostility in the air.

If anything, I almost believed that she was mellowing.

... ..

‘There she was...’

Every morning we would meet in the hall before breakfast. I could no longer claim to be surprised to find her there, as I had seen her almost every morning, in the exact same spot... staring dreamily about the hallway waiting to be run over by me.

That was fake as well, as no one could run into the same person every day since the beginning of term and not realize it would happen again. But I let it happen none the less. It offered a kind of security in its repetition, and allowed me to indulge in a little bodily contact with the girl. I admitted that I also liked having her grasp my arms to steady herself.

Now that I had some muscle on my arms, I liked it even more. It was good for the ego...

I had woken up one morning only to discover... I had abs...

I suppose it could have been that I had hunched forward slightly and my skin crinkled a little, and yeah, it wasn't really a dramatic change in my physique, but God Damn it , I had abs, and I was going to revel in the fact.

I liked to imagine every now and then that I would run into the girl and she would swoon at the feel of my rock hard muscles.

Given; in my imagination they seemed a little more impressive than they did in real life, but that didn't matter.

Then again, in my fantasy, those encounters became less realistic as they went on; often resulting in me some how loosing my shirt and exposing my magnificent midriff in the most ridiculous fashion.

'A guy could dream...'

But this lead to a slightly different realization, I liked Luna. Yes, I already knew that, and yes, even Cho knew that, and most likely Luna realized that on some level; but it struck me suddenly one day, I truly liked the girl. I turned down my old ex girlfriend because I liked her, and I had had it bad for that girl.

I realized I wanted a little more than to just 'accidentally' running into her every morning.

I wasn't in love or anything... it was far too early for that; but I definitely wanted to head down a different road than the one I was currently on. I wanted to...

...ask her out.

The mere thought of such an act sent my vaunted Gryffindor courage scampering away, like Crookshanks with his tail on fire. If only the masses could see me now; hiding behind a slab of stone, trying to work up the courage to ask a girl out.

Rita Skeater would eat me alive.

Taking a deep breath, I turned around... and bumped right into the girl my mind had thought about so much.

I swore, I "eaped" as I spotted those large eyes of hers.

"Harry, I was just coming to look for you. I expected to be knocked over 5 minutes ago." She scolded dreamily.

'Alright, here goes, I'll ask her now... were all alone; there's no better time.' I told myself.

Gathering my courage, I opened my mouth and said....

"Sorry about that; slept in..." I said charmingly.

'Coward!' My mind scolded.

Luna smiled at me dreamily, accepting my answer and dragged me away from my hiding spot, towards the entrance doors of the great hall.

Out of the corner of my eyes, I spotted movement and quickly turned to see who might have spotted my run in, but was relieved to only find a suit of armour scratching at a section of rust on its arm. The suits at least never spoke. Or so I hoped.

... ..

Waiting in the familiar defence classroom, the class waited to be introduced to new ways to feel pain. Professor Connelly, or as I had taken to calling him, Sir, had upped his expectations for the class ten fold. No one knew why he had run them through there ever increasing paces, but no one could claim him an inadequate instructor.

After the first few classes where students had not learned their dated spell, each detention had left the respective student ominously afraid of the man; no one had entered the class unable to perform to his expectations, after that. Even Malfoy had lacked his usual pompous attitude; as he recognized a man who would not tolerate such action.

I personally wondered what the man thought about Malfoy or the other children of the death eaters, but the man had not let on in any way.

I was about to stare out the window once more at the cloudy sky, when I was interrupted by a...

BANG

Quickly turning around with my wand at the ready and a defensive spell on my lips I prepared myself for an attack from Sir.

I was to be denied, as I spotted the familiar scowl and greasy locks of my most hated professor.

The man quickly swept into the room while shouting, "Wands away... and 20 points from Gryffindor for pointing your wand at your professor, Potter."

Oh Joy.

I had not even been the only one, as every other student in the class, including Malfoy and the other Slytherin's, had done the same. It was nice to see the man held my wand in such high regard.

'But what the hell was he doing here!?'

"We are to continue your lesson on over powering your opponents spells using Leman's reciprocative techniques." The man informed us.

At least he wasn't diverting from the syllabus like he had for Remus, but I knew the man was going to try and make up all the points he had been denied taking from me over the past few months by my avoidance of him.

Some of it had been natural self preservation techniques, as I naturally tended to try and steer away from the man like the plague, but mostly I had been hard to find as I spent most of my time within the room of requirement or outside. A place his pale complexion informed me, he hardly spent anytime.

Out the corner of my eye, I spotted Hermione's predictable muscle spasm that she called raising her hand. Some of the other students looked on in exasperated fondness of the girl for behaving so predictably. Others like Malfoy need not even be mentioned.

Snape charmed a piece of chalk to start diagramming notes on the board which the rest of us started to write. Hermione to her credit wrote down her notes while raising her left hand to continue waiting for the man to call on her. Which, if history was to be believed, might have been anywhere between now, and never.

The man kept his body facing the chalk board seemingly inspecting the notes as they wrote themselves, but we all knew he was perfectly aware of Hermione's hand.

"Mrs, Granger, will you put down your infernal hand! I have not even begun to teach!" The man snapped, spinning around with a scowl firmly plastered across his pasty face.

Hermione who had long ago faced the mans temperament, and her own respect for authority battered enough from I and Ron's constant insults towards Snape, took the scowl and response in stride as she respectfully asked.

“Please sir, I was curious as to what happened to Professor Connelly.” She bravely questioned. I was mightily impressed that the girl could sound so respectful to the man, considering all he had put her and the rest of us through.

The man sneered down his hooked nose at her, seemingly perturbed that she was exhibiting less than appropriate levels of fear and anxiety at his demeanour.

“I see that you are not as observant as you would have the rest of us believe Ms. Granger. I had expected better of you.” He said with an ugly, disappointed smile at the girl.

Hermione thankfully said nothing, which I had expected; Ron and I on the other hand twitched ever so slightly at the comment, as we had felt the waves of smugness wash over us as he looked down upon our friend.

“If you had paid attention in class, or in the sorting ceremony, you would have known that Mr. Connelly was a temporary instructor and would only be here until November. Now if I have sated your incessant curiosity, can we continue on with the lesson...” he asked with an agitated frown; as if Hermione were holding up the class to ask for tips on the application of eyeliner.

The girl’s cheeks blossomed noticeably as she quietly said, “Yes sir, sorry sir.”

A twittering of laughter from somewhere to our left focused my attention to a grinning Malfoy. He enjoyed watching the dressing down, even though it was minor in comparison to other incidents.

“I’m glad I have your blessing Ms. Granger; thank you.” He said snidely while focusing his attention on the rest of the class.

“Mr. Finnegan, tell me the theory behind the technique we will be learning today.” Snape quickly pounced.

“I uh...” He stuttered in surprise, floundering for the correct words.

Dean, who was sitting next to him, elbowed him; which thankfully refocused his attention.

“...The theory, it’s... um, when a caster defends them selves by changing their spell while it’s being cast to oppose their opponent; then the caster has to over power that person.” He stuttered. Even though he clearly knew the material, which I could attest to as I had seen him spend time studying the night before, Snapes presence and straight forward questioning had suitably confounded him.

“A barely acceptable answer, but correct none the less.” The man sneered down at the Irishman. “For future reference Mr. Finnegan, ‘uh’ and ‘um’ are not words I accept when being addressed. Try not to embarrass yourself further with such language within my presence again.”

Seamus looked like he wanted to defend himself but after years of exposure to the acerbic nature of the man, he wordlessly nodded his head while creating a fist under the table.

“Mr. Malfoy, a Proper answer if you please.” The man invited with a noticeable change in tone and demeanour. It was sickening to see such blatant favouritism, but what could I really do.

“Yes sir.” The pompous blonde said eagerly while sending smug smiles to the many scowling gryffindors.

“Leman stated that a wizard could overpower most attack spells by recreating the spell being sent at said wizard and intercepting the spell prior to contact, or by overpower their opponents spell with their own and effectively nullifying or even reversing the attack all together.” The boy finished.

I had to at least give it to the ponce. He did have a good understanding of the spell. He would have had to have had, if he wanted to avoid Sir’s detentions

“An excellent answer. Take ten points for Slytherin Mr. Malfoy.” The man said proudly.

Malfoy for his part sneered directly at Seamus and then Hermione, who had looked like she had wanted to answer the question all class.

Then, as an after thought, he sneered at me as well, as I was of course the wind beneath his obnoxious wings, and he could never forget about me. Sarcasm was great.

I rolled my eyes at him and refocused on Snape as I had to make sure I gave the man as little ammo as possible to work with. He was sure to cause me as much trouble as he could manage.

This was all the more frustrating as my method of dealing with him directly clashed with my new, no crap-taking attitude I had been nurturing. I had enjoyed asserting my own will over the past few months, and to have to revert; it grated on the nerves...

"Mr. Potter, since you like to show off so much, perhaps you can demonstrate the technique." The man queried with a distasteful sneer as he called me up. I had expected no less, as I stood up calmly and walked forward. I ignored the sniggers from Malfoy and his little sycophants, as I walked toward the man I would have gladly avoided all year round.

"Stand over there, Potter. Now, I think I shall attack, while you defend." The man stated rhetorically.

It was a testament to my own training and reaction time that I was able to respond as quick as I did.

I had barely reached the spot the man indicated before the rush of magic hurtling toward me triggered my survival skills, forcing me to spin and cast.

The class had even less time to gasp it's surprise, whether it was due to the quick and dirty tactics of the professor, or my own speedy reaction, but I was already casting by the time their intake of breath reached my ears.

The technique itself did not involve any fancy wand movements, or intricate phrasing. All it required was an initial spell that it could work

off of; by establish a conduit for it to enact over. In many ways, this technique resembled the priori incantantum from my grave yard battle.

During this quick moment, both Snapes magic and mine were interlocked in a battle of wills. I had to hand it to Snape; his will was like that of a charging bull. Steadfast, and near impossible to divert. The spell amplified that as I could feel his own percussion blast fighting my Protego.

From an outside observer, it would have looked like Snape was shooting ethereal water at me. The water formed a curved wall at the end of his magic that violently pounded on my own shield Ball.

A nifty trick I had learned from Sir. The normally only defensible spell, using a combination of spell mining and vector displacement techniques, had allowed me to create balls of blue air pockets, that could be used to pummel the enemy as the shield itself made the lightweight projectile harder than stone.

Anyone who was to check my wand would only see a shield charm, never knowing that I had turned the defensive spell into an offence. It was sort of like taking an actual metal shield, like the ones the knights sported in the corridors, crumpling them up into a ball, and banishing them at my enemies.

I took some pleasure in the fact that the man would most likely bruise if he lost to me.

Snape for his part seemed surprised that I had survived his surprise attack, but continued on pushing his spell farther towards me.

In a real fight; the spell connection would only last a moment, as neither duellist would waste valuable time trying to overpower an opponent with a single spell, but would rather if faced with a situation where equal or superior will's were present, would nudge the spell so it would miss the wizard entirely. But this was no longer about diverting a spell away; this was a battle of wills. Snape and I were going to show each other that we were the superior ones in comparison to the other.

Clearly Dumbledore's faith in our maturity was well placed.

Focusing my will, I stared down the man, and used the third little known aspect of the theory. The malleability of the spell. Leman had stated that during the spell connection the wizard casting could reform their spells into shapes and sizes that suited them, or change spells all together.

Thankfully some spells were incapable with this technique, so people need never fear a wizard changing there tickling charm into, say an Avada. Although there were many a dark spell that was compatible with the technique, so a certain level of vigilance was always recommended.

I used the third aspect of the technique in what I would have considered a unique fashion.

I almost expected the class to 'Oh' and 'ahh' as my shield ball grew larger and opened up from the back, closest to me.

I had to do this right as if I didn't, I would loose concentration and the shield would collapse, meaning I would be struck by Snapes overly powered percussion blast.

The fear that I might fail to my most hated teacher woke something up deep within me. A primal power that surged through my veins and into my brain, clearing up the haze I had never realised had been there.

Suddenly the world was clearer and moving in slow motion as I watched our two spells clash. It was as if the world throbbed to an eerie metronome; it played a hauntingly familiar rhythm.

Suddenly, the spell and challenge didn't seem as difficult as before. Firming my resolve I continued on...

The class watched as my Protego ball grew and unfolded itself from a ball, to a sheet, and then a ball again. I had in essence inverted my shield so it was now a cage...

The ball had engulfed both the spell, and Snape. It was rapidly decreasing, pushing Snape closer and closer towards the end of his own percussion spell.

There was of course an easy solution. Snape could end his own spell and not face being blasted within an enclosed space. But to do so would appear like submission on his part; within my eyes and his.

I was curious which route he would take, as either way I won.

He took the second.

His spells suddenly fizzled out, and I held my shield for a moment before dissipating it. The man didn't seem very happy if the hateful scowl was anything to go by.

"I asked you to demonstrate the technique Mr. Potter; not show off what little you had managed to retain from the training the headmaster has pampered his golden boy with." He sneered.

I heard the murmuring start up; it was like someone had un-muted the room and the ambient noise struck me all at once, the noise and the surprise.

I was definitely surprised. Surprised and angry.

He knew I wasn't supposed to reveal my training to anyone, yet here he went announcing it out loud in front of the entire class, which included the two biggest gossips in school, my own friends, some of whom, like Hermione knew nothing about my extra curricular activities, and the sons and daughters of the death eaters.

I wondered whether this is what Remus felt like when his own secret was let out of the bag. Worried, nauseous, and violent...

Deciding on a course of action, I held my ground with a stoic face that hardly hid my anger and stared the man down.

"I don't know what you're talking about, sir." The 'sir' tacked on with distaste.

“Are you calling me a ‘liar’ Mr. Potter” he questioned dangerously. I think he was thrown by the fact that I would not admit to the training sessions. Previous years, I might have scowled at the man and hoped no one was paying any attention, but that would have only helped spread the information as fact due to my silence.

The information would spread none the less, but I could at least cast enough doubt to salvage the situation.

“No sir, but if you believe that the headmaster is providing me with extra training session’s then I invite you to call him here and confirm it for yourself. Surely he would not lie...” I said calmly. My wand was still grasped tightly within my hand. I so wished to be able to unleash my ‘training’ on the man. He was a spy and death eater, and it may have been youthful arrogance and zealousness, or the adrenalin still pumping in my veins, but I secretly thought I could take him.

I could see the rage behind his eyes, as he had been denied the satisfaction of getting under my skin and disseminating a secret I had been so religiously keeping since the beginning of term.

He knew he could not call the headmaster here, as the man would clearly side with me and claim to have no knowledge of the training, and to call the man a liar would only work against him, but to not challenge me... that would take away from his mystique, and eat away at his personal pride to never let a Potter get the best of him; verbally, or magically. Something I had managed to do, not once, but twice today.

I was quite proud of myself.

‘Go me!’

“Thirty points for your cheek, and detention. Now get out.” He seethed at me.

I needed no further instruction as I gladly turned around and grabbed my bag from the front table, and walked out of the room.

Sadly I had not managed to avoid looking in the general direction of Hermione in my quick exit.

She had paid definite attention to our little exchange.

She had not missed the mans remark about training...

... ..

Elsewhere:

'I'm the girl... he should ask me...'

'But he's shy, maybe I should ask him. I already know he won't turn me down, so that should make it easier.'

'But no... its not how it's done, the boy is supposed to ask the girl, not the other way around.'

'Then again, we aren't living in the Middle Ages anymore... Who's to say a girl can't ask out a boy?'

'But I don't wanna....'

My current dilemma had been one I had been fussing over since I had truly realized what Harry had said in the room of requirement.

All I could do was thank whatever muse that had inspired my normal dreamy exterior, as I could properly focus my attention on the problem without drawing any more attention to myself.

Every morning that I had seen Harry, I remembered the feelings he had for me, and each nudge or bump with each other felt like a secret seduction; our own little taboo display of fondness for each other. The only problem being... I was a greedy girl. I wanted more.

Sitting through Professor Kahn's review lecture on the Norse symbolic reference clusters of six hundred A.D. ... I couldn't help but wish the man some excitement.

The man was as boring as Binn's, only with a pulse. Plus he was creepy as hell. I was thankful the man was not a permanent resident of the castle. I would not like to find myself alone with him in a dark corridor.

'It was the goatee.' I concluded.

The man spoke in drones and dull tones, indicating that he wanted to be here just as much as we did, which for a Ravenclaw, was surprisingly, not very much. I would have rather sat through another lecture on proper wand polishing with Professor Lockhart... at least that man had pretty hair I could stare at. It was so unnaturally bouncy that often I had become entranced by it.

Focus...

Right... Harry, what to do about Harry?

I knew for a fact that the boy was shy and nervous, not as much as Neville, but still lacking in enough confidence to ask a girl out right away.

I wasn't one of those girl's who wanted a suave charming man to sweep her off her feet with bravado and acts of daring... well no more than the average girl, I assumed.

But still, I wanted him to ask me out rather than the other way around.

Sadly, I might need to take the initiative to start anything. 'But really why should I... screw feminism.'

I wanted him to come to me. It was tradition... you don't go messing with tradition. It's just not done...

There was also that tiny little insecurity in the back of my head that reminded me that just maybe, he had changed his mind after that night. Maybe he saw me as a friend and I would just embarrass myself...

Maybe the ritual thingy affected him so much that he never felt anything for me at all.

Maybe he was really expressing You-Know-Who's secret desire for blonde, grey eyed, Ravenclaws...

‘...Oh dear lord, that's disturbing!’

I was lucky that no one paid me any attention, as my startled eyes and twitch in posture screamed utterly terrified.

I was also lucky that class had just ended.

“For next class, read chapter eighteen, and complete questions one through thirty in your review section.” The man said absentmindedly as he started to pack up his own materials. I had learned that he taught for the continuing studies guild. They were the ones that owned Kwikspell and controlled the apprenticeship within the ministry.

Professor Kaun was a part owner of the guild; through lucky inheritance, and smart investing. The man was very knowledgeable about Runes I was told, just not very enthusiastic, or at least in what little he taught at Hogwarts.

That was evident as he was out the door almost as fast as his students.

Exiting the room last, I dawdled away toward Ravenclaw tower. I wanted to put my things away and perhaps wander. I had long ago completed his assigned homework, and the only other homework I had was Professor McGonagall's essay on cross species transfiguration. I had another week to finish it, and I was already half done, so I felt no need to rush.

Running tips of my fingers across the stone walls of the corridor I felt the coarse stone gradually get smoother and smoother as I walked closer to my common room.

For some reason, the corridors closest to Ravenclaw common room were almost completely smooth, as if they had been sanded to a gloss.

The further one was from the common room, the coarser the stone walls became.

Ravenclaw tower, being on the west side of the castle, shone brightly during the sunsets due to this fact as the light reflected well off the smooth stone.

The hufflepuff common rooms, which were the furthest away, had jagged stone corridors that, while sturdy, were uncomfortable to lean on.

Stopping in front of a particularly ornate suit of armour, I grasped the quill it held in its left hand and whispered the password.

“Epiphany...”

I really wondered who came up with these passwords. That person should be shot.

The suit of armour tilted its head to look down at me with eyes that were not even there and waved me in. A section of the stone wall immediately retracted in upon itself and revealed the rectangular passage into the common room.

A bright circular room awaited me. I was still floored to this day by the design of the tower. The common room was the length of the entire tower. Going up eight stories. The first level being the common room itself. A room surrounded by comfy blue cushions, plush tan love seats and ottomans, a roaring central fireplace that was more a lowered pit of flames. Somehow Smoke was never a factor for us.

And of course there were book cases, as we were Ravenclaws after all. They weren't secret tomes by any means; not that that stopped the ever enthusiastic first years from hoping it so.

No, they were books on philosophy, and notes on observations of nature and the environment in general. There were also yearbooks, one per year for every year for over two hundred years, with a page dedicated to one graduating Ravenclaw from each year. A legacy and tradition, we Ravenclaws were proud to maintain.

“Luna, Hi!” A bright voice greeted me.

I couldn’t help but groan inside. It was Christy... my room mate; and according to the article the prophet had posted... my own personal gal pal. ‘Woo freaking hoo...’

“Hello Christy...” I greeted in my normal dreamy tones. Honestly I just wanted to drop my books off and wander the halls alone to brood over my Harry dilemma... I didn’t want to go another twelve rounds with the girl as she tried to question me on how ‘dishy’ Harry truly was. I may have agreed, but I personally saw no reason to share that thought with anyone, let alone this girl.

“Where have you been Luna, I haven’t seen you all day...” She questioned.

“Class...” I answered back. ‘Where else would I be?’ The girl was with me through transfiguration, and charms just this morning. The girl had an attention span of a Nat, and a peripheral vision to match.

I could have stood beside her for an hour and she probably would have ignored me as if I had not been there at all. For her to notice me meant she wanted something; that meant trouble for me.

“Really, what classes are you in...?” She asked curiously.

“The same ones as you, except I take runes instead of divination...” I inform her for what must have been the eleventh time. This year at least. God knows how many times I’ve had to tell her what classes I’ve had with her, since we started school.

“Strange...” She commented, clearly perplexed.

Common misnomer number 1: not all Ravenclaws are smart... Christy is proof of that.

"Anyway, Guess what..." She asked brightly as she followed me up the stairs towards our dorm.

I so very wanted to tell her 'No, I didn't want to guess', but that would have been rude. Instead, I asked... "Did you finish your Potions essay yet?"

I knew the girl blanched, as she always left her essays till the last moment, and it was indeed that; as the essay was due tomorrow. I had already completed it; as I didn't want to dilly dally in a subject I was weak in.

"Oh no... I haven't started. How much is it out of 20?"

"25..." I corrected, as I pulled open the door to our dorms. Being a fifth year, our dorms were 3 floors above the common room, with the first years at the very top. They at least got some exercise, as they climbed all those stairs. Although most then had to face the vertigo of looking down at the common room below. I was told it was one of the drawbacks of being a first year Ravenclaw... receiving the highest dorms in the house.

The entire tower was an open space, so it made the room seem so much larger than it really was. Although I had to admit I liked the tingly sensation I felt as I looked down from such a height, I think my room mates worried I was suicidal by how much time I spent just leaning against the banister overlooking our common room. That probably added to my Loony reputation.

Anyway... Christy was saying something... I should probably pay attention.

"... So it's fine then right...?" She asked.

'Nuts'... I had no idea what she asked me. For all I know, if I said yes she might have just received permission to raid my money bag for

whatever amount resided within, then again, she could have just asked to borrow a quill.

I turned my head and faced her. I had learned a trick from Professor Snape that usually came in quite handy for situations like this. Turning to stare at the girl I locked my eyes on her, then after exactly 4 seconds of hard staring, I raised my right eyebrow.

The girl fidgeted.

"I know... I know I probably should've done it earlier but..." My eye brow stayed quirked, which was a little hard to do. My muscles were starting to twitch from the exertion, that's not to say keeping my eye brow raised was like running a marathon, but I generally had to put so much force to raise them that I started to strain the muscles within my face. That sounded fairly sad.

The girl continued to fidget under my 'severe' stare. "I won't let it happen again, but please, just this once, can I see what you wrote...?" She pleaded.

'Oh, it's a good thing I had used my Snape stare.' Christy was known for two things, and two things only. Her air headedness, which sadly helped gain her a few friends, and her subtlety.

I had been down this road more than once with the girl. I would let her borrow a paper and the next day, she would hand in a near perfect replica of what I had written. If it weren't for her atrocious lying ability, I might have been suspected of copying off of her, instead I just received detention for helping another student cheat. And hear I thought she might have wanted to borrow my notes. I almost said yes.

And for an essay with Snape... Oh hell no.

I wasn't about to go down that road again.

"I'll lend you my notes and maybe check over your finished copy, if I have time; but I can't give you my essay." I finally answered.

"What... why?" She begged.

"I already handed it in..." I lied. In reality it was sticking out of my bag just waiting to be spotted by the girl.

I always had trouble saying no to people... although, I had no problem lying...

That doesn't sound right...

"Oh..." the girl said crushed; as she was faced with the possibility of doing her own homework.

"Alright, thanks Luna..." Suddenly her eyes lit up, just as I had put my things away, hid my essay under my mattress, and pulled out my notebook.

"I have another favour to ask you Luna..." The girl said in remembrance. This was apparently the favour she wanted to ask me earlier. I had hoped she had forgotten.

I handed her my notebook, and started walking towards the door half hoping that just maybe she wouldn't follow. No such luck.

"A couple of us were talking. We heard about the group you got involved with last year. The D.A. was it?" She asked

I nodded half curious, half dreading what she would request of me.

"Well we heard that everyone who was in it received top marks for defence last year, even those who were a year or two above the rest..." the girl hinted.

I knew for a fact that the girl could care less about the subject of defence or grades. She was aiming to marry a rich pureblood one day. She at least had the looks for that type of ambition, so who knows, she might just get her wish...

"Yes, Harry was an excellent teacher..." I commented dreamily as I walked down the final set of stairs with the girl in my wake. I didn't

purposefully sound dreamy, as I knew I did. It was just something I developed over the years.

Anyway, that was totally unrelated to whatever the girl wanted...

"Yeah, he must have been, that Harry Potter. He's something special." She said in her own dreamy voice. I tried my hardest not to role my eyes at the expected answer.

As shy as Harry was, I half expect him to have an ego complex from all the girls who pined after him. Most of them were entranced by his hero status, some his wealth which was reputed to be an immense inheritance, some just wanted to join into the house of Potter as it was a well respected pure blood family, and then some, a combination of the three. It didn't hurt that he was quite attractive...

'Oh great... now I'm starting to sound like one of the drones that pine after him. That's not a good sign.' I hoped I wouldn't turn into one of the many fan girls he had amassed. That would be terribly embarrassing.

"What was I saying...?" The girl said after snapping out of her trance...

"Right, Harry and the D.A." she answered for herself. "Well the thing is Luna, A couple of us would like to join, but when we went and asked him, he said the D.A. wasn't accepting new members..." She said in an unusually conniving way. The girl was anything but sly, but she must have rehearsed a dozen times in advance to sound half as sly as she was now.

Not that that was very sly at all... in retrospect.

"Harry said that he didn't have enough time to re-teach the new members everything the D.A. knew." I informed her as I finally reached the common room door and exited into the hallway. Sadly the girl was hot on my heels.

"Yeah that's what he said, but we were hoping that maybe you could convince him to take us... it would be such a big favour to us if you

would..." the girl asked with puppy dog eyes. I wasn't really looking at her so I couldn't say with absolute certainty that she was giving me that look, but I knew her well enough to tell when she was delivering it. It was in her tone of voice.

"I could ask him, but I don't think he would..." I said finally after contemplating my options.

I could play it dumb and pretend like I don't know why they would come to me to ask for entrance, but really half the school already 'knew' that we were secretly dating, thanks to the article.

Even though we weren't that didn't change the fact that everyone thought we were.

I might as well just cut the entire conversation short and just tell her I would ask and get it over with, as there was no convincing the girl otherwise.

"Thanks Luna; you're the best." She beamed. Quickly hugging me from behind and forcing me to halt or lose my balance, I patted what little of her I could reach as she was squeezing my arms to my body, as if I had been petrified.

I feared I looked like I was consoling the girl awkwardly, as I patted her hand soothingly as she hugged me from behind. I was very uncomfortable.

Eventually she let go of me, and I was free to escape deeper into the castle.

It was about 3 and I had the rest of the day free. I was about to find a nice quiet place to continue brooding over Harry, when I spotted something.

I was deep in the castle, some where close to the kitchens. But there, hiding behind a statue of a Wild boar, was a familiar red demon...

My eyes squinted as I took a moment to glare at my foe. He had eluded me before, but not this time. He turned around and spotted

me. If his face weren't made out of gelatine I assume it would have glared at me hatefully, just as I glared at it.

"Bob..." I greeted.

The Gummy bear scowled at me with its motionless face. Only one of us was going to leave our encounter today, the victor... I was determined it was going to be me.

My hand raised and I grabbed my wand from its resting spot above my ear.

I was ready...

... ..

I had no idea where to go. Defence should have let out a couple of minutes ago, so Hermione was sure to come in search of me, to find out about my training. The room of requirement should have been the first place she would have looked, as I had confessed to her in a moment of stupidity that that is where I had spent most of my time studying as I liked to do it alone.

Of course, I could just say that Snape meant my training that I had at the citadel, as everyone knew about that, but some how I knew that would not fly with the girl.

Honestly I was still reeling over the mans pettiness. Dumbledore assured me that all those who knew about my training swore they would not reveal it. For some reason I had believed that even Snape would adhere to his own word. I was clearly wrong in that arena.

'I should probably go and tell Dumbledore the cats out of the bag.' If I knew Snape, he would have probably concocted his own story implicating me in some ridiculous fashion.

With my mind maid up, I marched myself toward the familiar gargoyle statue. The gargoyle leapt aside on its own as I approached, allowing me to wander up the spiral staircase.

Reaching the door, I waited to be welcomed inside as usual, but it never came. Knocking in puzzlement I called...

"Professor Dumbledore?"

No one responded. Knocking once more, and turning the knob, I peeked my head inside.

"Headmaster?" I called as I stared inside.

The room was barren of any living creature. Even Fawkes was absent. Wondering what I should do, I was startled as a voice from above me spoke.

"You boy, what are you doing here so early. We weren't expecting you till Sunday." A commanding voice questioned me. Turning up I came face to face with the bushy eyed face of Armando Dippet; a man I had only ever seen in a pensieve memory.

"I was looking for Professor Dumbledore..." I said after a few moments. I had never gotten used to speaking to paintings. It felt too much like trying to speak to an imaginary friend. Something I had never been comfortable experimenting with in my childhood. Uncle Vernon would have probably thought I had conjured up a demon or something in retrospect.

"Well that was obvious from all you're hollering. Why are you looking for the headmaster..." he questioned sarcastically.

Reminding myself that I was talking to a piece of canvas, I raised an eyebrow imperiously at the portrait.

"I needed to tell him that Snape..."

"Professor Snape..." a random portrait reprimanded me...

"Snape..." I repeated defiantly, "Told everyone that I was being trained. I wanted to know what to do now." I confided to the room.

They would hear anyway so I felt no need in hiding it from them.

"Why that no good son of a" Turning around abruptly to stare in wonder at the fuming portrait with greying brown hair, and regal blue eyes, I was surprised to hear a headmaster who would openly bad mouth a professor.

"Hush, Amadeus. Not in front of the student..." another portrait reprimanded.

Turning around an elderly woman who struck me as a Mrs. Weasley type stared at me fondly.

"I'm sorry deary; Amadeus was never very fond of your Professor Snape... Pay him no mind." She said soothingly.

"Oh stop mothering the boy Amelia; he's a hardy chap. You've heard the scrapes he's been in. He can stand to hear a dead man bad mouth a bastard." Amadeus said with smile towards me. He struck me as a man similar to Ron's temperament. He clearly held the same views as my room mate.

"And it wasn't just me that didn't want the fool teaching here, we were all divided on letting him teach here, you as well if I recall..." the man reminded the flustered women.

The women blushed slightly, but stared firmly at the man. "The current Headmaster believes him trustworthy; it would be wise for you to remember that." The women scolded.

"Ignore those two..." a third voice whispered to me. Turning my head I spotted another female portrait, a tight lipped women who looked as stern as Professor McGonagale, but with Professor Flitwick smile.

"Those two argue all the time, its all they can do as they have no other portraits to escape to." She explained while rolling her eyes at the pair.

"I never really thought about what it must be like to be a portrait..." I said as I thought about a life as an 8 by 10.

“Well don’t you worry too much about it lad, as much as we complain we aren’t the real thing. Hopefully the real me is taking a tan in the afterlife... preferably with a couple strapping young men attending to the drinks.” She said with a lecherous grin towards me.

I couldn’t help but smile at the women. She was more like Tonks in disposition. Warm and carefree.

“Name’s Harry” I greeted. I felt the need to introduce myself to the women, God knows how many paintings I had met, but so few had been as charming as this one.

“Oh, I know; you’re a popular topic for us... I am Headmaster Gripts... But you may call me Charlene.” The women invited as she tilted her head in greeting.

“Gripts... I’ve heard that name somewhere before...?” I said.

“Such a charmer you are; but I doubt I am in many history books, lad. I think you may have heard of me from Professor Dumbledore though...” The women reminded me significantly.

Suddenly I remembered the day I had spent in the Citadel hospital wing. Professor Dumbledore had told me that he would keep the information he held on me, in a safe behind a portrait.

“That’s right... Professor Dumbledore said he kept my files behind you. Would you mind if I took a look.” I asked rhetorically. I was going to look either way, but I felt the need to be polite to the women.

“Of course lad, as long as you know the password.” She said with a smile.

“Right... um, Gemma...” I said after taking a moment to remember. My own smile turned upside down as I watched the women frown.

“Is that not the password...?” I asked. Suddenly I noticed that the entire room had gone silent. Turning, the other portraits were staring at me with calculating eyes; Amadeus and Amelia as well.

“No, that is a correct password; I just had not expected you to know that one.” The women said with a strained smile.

“There’s more than one password?” I asked.

“Aye lad, everything that goes into the safe, has its own password. But there is a special password that overrides all of them. And you apparently know it...” The women frowned.

“I knew the man trusted you, but... try to understand lad, I and every other headmaster in this room know more about the man than most of the wizarding world. I specifically know what he keeps behind me. I did not believe anyone would ever gain that particular password.” The women explained.

“Why...?” I asked.

“It’s not my story to tell lad, and I would ask that you not ask the headmaster to tell you it either. He has the right to tell it to you if and when he wants to.” She replied.

I nodded in understanding, even though really all this did was peak my curiosity.

“Good lad. Now, you may slide my portrait down, and take what you will from the safe, but I ask that you only take what the headmaster has invited you to take. I can not stop you, but I hope all the tails of your character the man has entertained us with are true.” The women asked.

I was also given a no nonsense warning glare that promised that she clearly would disapprove of any invasion into the mans privacy. I had no intention of crossing her or invading the mans privacy so I followed her instructions.

Reaching up and grasping the top of her gilded wooden frame, I gently pulled and watched as the frame slid away to reveal a recessed wall space.

It was divided in two by a self, on the very bottom files and folders were organised alphabetically, with names that ate away at my resolve.

There before me were files on Lucious Malfoy, Antonin Dolohov, Bellatrix Lestrange, and numerous other death eaters; but near the very end, sat a slightly thick folder by the name of T. M. Riddle.

On the opposite side I spotted a folder labelled, H.J. Potter, with a familiar bar charted sheet of paper peeking out, reminding me that this was what I was looking for. On the top shelf though I was entranced by the multitude of objects. Daggers, time turners, wands, and things that I suspected were probably illegal to own sat tempting me with their seductive allure. Strangely enough, in the very centre of them all were a pair of glass vials. They were large and upside down as they were placed with the opening over top a pedestal at their feet. Each held strands of hair. One a mahogany brown, another, a vibrant red.

Reminding myself that I was starting to intrude on his privacy just by looking, I firmed my resolve and reached in and took the folder labelled H.J. Potter.

Deciding it better to remove the temptation I pulled the portrait of Charlene Gripits up, covering the hidden treasure trove.

Her eyes traveled down towards my arm with the folder labelled under my name and smiled at me.

“Good lad.” She praised with a crooked smile. “Now when you’re done, there’s no need to pull me down again, just pass the folder through my painting and it will be put back where you put it. Mind, that you avoid passing it through my face though... I’m sure you can understand why” she instructed.

I nodded my thanks and walked over to my regular seat.

I might as well read through the file while I wait on the man.

Pulling open the cover I was faced with a slab of papers with numbers and letters interspersed in nonsensical patterns that clearly conveyed some kind of meaning I didn't understand. Pulling that page aside, and then the next, and the next, and the next, and so forth until finally, I reached a sheet I could understand.

It was dated just a few days ago. Halloween to be exact. I had not realized the man had had the opportunity to do such a thorough scan of my magic while I lay unconscious in the hospital wing.

It was a sheet similar to the one I had first saw in the citadel, the only thing that was different, was the fact that almost all the bars that were there before, were now labelled...

Error: ...

That was different.

Pulling the sheet out, I noticed that it was attached to another two pages. One of them being my original scan, and the other, a much older scan; I say older, as it was dated November 1st 1981.

'This was the scan that he took just after Voldemort attacked me.'

The sheet of paper was near illegible, as Dumbledore had scribbled notes on different sections.

Some of it I could understand, like where he commented on my strange neuro chemical levels, which were 'probably due to the Avada Kedavra rebounding', but other notes like when he said my 'B4-sigma's were not in sync with my y-Theta's in accordance with the mercadaian drift calculations' completely stumped me.

Scratching my head I turned the page over, and looked over at the rest of the folder.

Surprisingly, it was a sort of journal of my time at Hogwarts, noting any significant events, like when I displayed parseltongue abilities, or killed a basilisk. It was a bit creepy to know someone kept such close

tabs on you, but I reasoned that Dumbledore would have known I would have seen this when he told me about the hidden wall safe.

That brought up another point; Dumbledore had given me his master password, which if I understood correctly would let me take whatever I wished from the wall space. The way the portrait explained it to me, it sounded a little like Moody's trunk, where if I had used a certain password, only certain contents would appear. But by using the master, I called forth every object hidden. I had no idea how the magic worked but it was certainly possible.

What stumped me though was the level of trust Dumbledore displayed in me by giving me such a password. Considering my track record with snooping in on pensieve memories and ferreting out clues and secrets I was originally never meant to know, I couldn't understand why the man would trust me with such information, and tools.

Something in me wanted to prove the man right for that level of blind trust, I knew I would never betray that trust, and promised never to go through the rest of his things until he invited me to do so. It was definitely the least I could do.

BANG

Startled, I turned around to see what had made such a noise.

"That Potter brat has gone too far, his disrespect and... Potter!" Snape seethed in hatred as he spotted me, stopping his tirade as he realized I was in the room.

"Professor..." I said distastefully. Deciding I would take the higher ground and leave, I started to gather the papers I had removed and placed them back in the folder.

"What do you think you are doing Potter, Going though the Headmaster files? You'll be expelled for this..." the man crowed as he stalked closer to me.

Picking up the folder before the man could place a hand on it; I took a step back and closer to the wall safe and Charlene.

“The headmaster gave me permission to see this folder, ‘sir’.” I defended, as I pulled the folder out of his reach as he tried to make a grab for it.

I watched as his eyes tracked the folder intently. I knew he had spotted my name, and was itching to see what was inside.

“Do not try and lie to me Potter, Give me the folder.” He commanded with a hand outstretched, reminding me very much of a claw that was ready to gouge at me should I come near.

I took another step back and avoided the mans touch as he made a grab for the folder again. Thinking quickly, I made a grab for my wand and banished the folder towards the wall safe. I watched satisfied as it sank through the painted chest of the long dead headmaster.

She gave me a satisfied smirk, and Amadeus winked at me approvingly. The rest of the portraits were clearly taking exception to Snape’s attitude; as they frowned and warned him to leave me be.

“Potter, what do you think you are doing?” He bellowed in rage as he watched the folder disappear behind the portrait of the stern woman.

“As I said, Professor...” I said with a slight smugness in my voice.

“... Professor Dumbledore told me I could look at the file, as it is related to me... and personal.” I said significantly; although I already knew that mattered very little to the man.

“Do not be a fool Potter, do you think I do not already know what is in that folder...” the man spat at me.

A moment of doubt flickered within me, but I decided to place my trust in Dumbledore as he had done in me. He had promised me that the information would stay between the two of us, and I believed him.

"Then it shouldn't matter, Sir. If you want to see it, you can reach in like I did and pull the folder out. You should obviously know then that I could not have gotten a hold of the folder unless I knew how to access it in the first place." I goaded.

If anything the mans scowl deepened even further, I thought that just maybe, if he could he would thrash me within an inch of my life. I kind of wanted him to try... as it would give me an excuse to do the same.

He stared at me intently; his eyes locked on to mine, his hand twitching near his waist where I knew he kept his wand. I realized the man was trying to use Legilimency on me.

For a moment I was furious that he would try to steal the information from my mind, but I quickly calmed after reminding myself that the ritual had taken care of that little issue.

'Do unto others as you would have them do unto you Snivelus...'

I decided to see if I could use my... mind reading?

...On the man. Staring into his eyes intently I tried to listen in on any thing I could. I knew occlumency was not a factor as I had felt emotion from Dumbledore himself... but for some reason, I could not sense anything from him.

Snape seemed to realize at that moment, that he could not enter my mind; as a surprised outrage started to overcome his demeanour, as if I had wronged him by not being accessible to mind probes or whatever it was he did to me.

"Get out Potter... I have business with the headmaster." The man spat at me. Literally of course, as I had watched the spittle fly from his mouth and onto my robes.

Giving the man a condescending look; I said, "Of course, sir..." turned about face, and stared at the headmasters.

"It was nice talking with you; please tell Professor Dumbledore I was looking for him." I asked.

“That we will Mr. Potter.” Amadeus cheered proudly as if I were his very own son, and had received the Order of Merlin.

“Thank you. Headmaster Gripits... it was a pleasure mam.” I said.

She gave me a saucy wink, which was a little disturbing considering the fact that she reminded me so much of two of my own professors, and told me to come back anytime.

Walking out of the room, I spared one last glance back at Professor Snape.

I was proud to say, he was definitely unhappy.

... ..

Elsewhere:

‘How did it come to this...?’

I had chased the rotten little bugger all the way down to the kitchens, where I suddenly learned... he had prepared a trap.

The little critter had twenty or thirty other cloned bobs waiting in back up behind the ladles.

Needless the say, havoc ensued.

Pots flew, Pastries smashed, elves cried, and little children around the world waved multi-coloured-flags... although that last one had little to do with what was happening here.

Apparently a rather naive elf had fired a spell at the lead Bob.... That was a mistake.

Whatever kind of magic elf magic was, it multiplied the red demon a hundred fold.

Currently, the room was split. On my side, the House elves, with Dobby wearing a Sauce pan helmet, and Chippy shielding herself with an iron lid, and brandishing a small wok.

On the other side, an army of blood red, sadistic, sugary, evil! The Army lead by the one seated near the back on a throne ladle; the armies of Bob.

He seemed to be directing orders to his followers, which seemed impossible considering his mouth could not form words... but his men seemed to understand none the less, as they grouped together in formation after formation, and consolidated themselves.

"Ms. Luna mam... What does you's wish us to do." Dobby asked. He was my general, in this little melee.

"First of all, No one is to use magic on them. Under any circumstance..." I ordered.

Every elf nodded immediately as they could definitely see the logic in that. One particular elf looked down shame faced as he had been the one to create the current army.

Out the corner of my eye I spotted a white streak and immediately ducked.

An éclair whizzed by my head to smatter messily against the stone wall.

"No, they's has found Dessert!" An unknown elf moaned.

Soon the air was filled with flying pastries.

"Down!" I cried. Dobby, in a heroic display selflessness, tackled Chippy to prevent her from being creamed by a particularly gooey pastry.

"Spotting a set of pots and pans lying in a basket near the back, I crawled around the ducking elves to make my way over to the box.

“Excellent...” I grinned as I observed the heavy cast iron cook wear.

“Listen up...” I cried. Immediately a dozen heads turned to stare at me.

“Start grabbing Pots...” I reached in and picked up a particularly large one and passed it to an elf beside me. He probably could have been cooked in it himself; it was so large.

“... When I give the signal, trap them, under the pot or squish them.” I commanded.

I received a firm nod, and a respectful salute from a few, as I passed out the cook wear.

Thinking quickly I started heating up the bottoms of the pots of those that I had dubbed them ‘the Squishy’s’. Spotting a lone pot that was not being used; I noted happily that it was filled with water.

I smiled dangerously... Bob wouldn’t know what hit him.

Quickly I started heating the water up, and those with unheated pots, I commanded to do the same. As they filled them with water.

Everything was ready. I had the elves with the boiling hot water gather in front with me... “On the count of three...” I whispered.

At the affirmative I prepared myself.

“One...”

The pastries continued to fly, the elves quickly vanished the ruined éclairs.

“Two...”

The elf beside me was twitchy, he had never seen battle like this...I prayed he would hold it together.

“...Three!” I cried.

We stood up as one, and simultaneously heaved our boiling water at the armies of Bob.

‘Success...!’

The floor troops were swept away by the scalding liquid and started to melt under the intense heat.

Sadly, most of the army was above the ground, on chairs, counters and tables. They were suitably stunned by our action, and we didn’t waste one second of it.

“My, Squishy’s... Attack!” I cried, waving my spatula like a rapier.

There was a primal war cry that emanated from the second battalion, as they charged. No one messed with dessert on their watch.

... ..

I was feeling a little peckish and decided I might as well get a snack. Dinner wouldn’t be served for another few hours so that meant a trip to the kitchens...

I had meant to ask Dobby about of Winky. I had not seen hide nor hair of the depressed elf at all this year.

Reaching the kitchens I turned my head and stared at the entrance to the corridor. Something there had drawn my attention, squinting, I scrutinized the entrance.

‘There’ in the corner, sat a red gummy bear. It appeared to be trying to push past the barrier into the Node below. I was a little surprised the treat knew that there was something there at all.

Quickly bending down, I snatched the little critter up by its squishy body.

“None of that you little rascal...” I scolded.

Blinking, I realized I was talking to an animated gummy candy.

'My life is not normal...' I concluded. It couldn't be if talking to gummy bears were as common as talking to a pet dog.

Keeping a firm hold on the little blighter, as it fidgeted and thrashed in my finger tips, I tickled the pear and opened the entrance to the kitchens...

For a moment all I could do was stare.

To my left... hoards of house elves were slamming pots and pans over counter tops. To my right, Luna love good, Dobby, and Chippy clad in armour fashioned from kitchen wear, directed the remaining house elves in a kamikaze run at what appeared to be a mass of red.

I realized that the mass was a hoard of Gummy bears, like the little one I held within my grasp.

I wanted to comment, but all I could do was stare in horrified fascination as a small house elf was over run by the hoard of candies, momentarily creating a knee high thrashing jelly monster that wailed and screeched. Soon the unfortunate elf toppled over and was lifted up and carried away. The gummy bears lifting the 20 pound creature as if they were ants in a cartoon lifting up pick nick basket.

The little elf cried and clawed at the floor as it was pulled over to the other side, to become a prisoner of war.

'Definitely not normal...' I thought.

Quickly spotting a streak of white I ducked, and avoided being hit by an éclair...

"Luna...!" I cried in confused shock as I ran over to the girl, bent over to make my self a smaller target.

The girl in question turned her bright and unusually serious eyes on me.

“Harry...” She greeted me in polite affirmation, as if we weren’t in a war zone between house elves and hoards of gummy bears....

“What’s going on...?” I asked, as I grabbed a sauce pan lid and shielded myself.

“Ms. Luna Mam’s is protecting the baked good’s sir, the bad food is ruining desert.” Dobby piped up, to my left as he rapidly filled a pot full of water, and heated it. Then calling out...”Clear!” He threw the contents over to the enemy side of the room.

Elves quickly scattered, as doobby had thrown the boiling water at a particular section of the room where a concentrated mass were pulling éclairs out of the large ice box, to reload there projectiles.

Some of the gummies survived, but most were already dissolving in the steaming liquid.

“Good work doobby. Jasper Secure the éclairs!” Luna Ordered.

It was strange that as I watched the girl order elves to secure the desert, I was never fonder of the girl, as I was now. Something about her no nonsense approach to gummy uprising was quite alluring to me.

“This is fun...” She grinned insanely at me as she confessed her enjoyment in leading the kitchen staff to battle. She ducked the last of the pastries; the elves having secured the large walk in fridge.

I stared into her silver eyes, as she smiled at me in happiness. Our eyes locked as I smiled fondly at the girl.

... ..

Harry was staring at me so intently. There was a smile on his face that I had never seen before. It made me feel warm and wanted. I wanted him to always smile at me like that.

Forget Bob, and his armies of evil. All that mattered was right now. All that mattered was the person with the handsome smile and emerald

eyes, who was looking at me in a way I had never been looked at before.

... ..

I stared into her silvery eyes, and all that I could think was...

‘This is when you want to ask her?!’

I tended to pick the most obtuse situations to do anything significant, now was no different.

Reigning in whatever courage I could muster, I stared at the girl and Said...

“Do-you-want-to-go-on-a-Date-with-me?”

I was a little confused as my question came out in a strange double echo...

Suddenly noting the other voice and the open mouth of the girl in front of me; I realized that Luna had asked me something as well.

“When-your-free,-do-you-want-to-go-out-on-a-date...?” she had asked. Her eyes dreamier than ever.

We both stared at one another for a moment, and smiled simultaneously.

We had gotten our answer.

“Run, they has found the egg beaters!” A terror filled elf cried.

‘It was just going to be one of those days... wasn’t it’ I sighed.

AN: I am slightly sleep deprived as I write this chapter. Having not slept the night before, as I was studying for my final exam. I felt the need to complete this chapter before I headed off to bed.

In case my Beta is reading this, can you please get in contact with me, as I haven't been able to get a hold of you for a few weeks now?

I really wanted to write in references to Weapons of mass destruction and terrorism for my little skirmish, but I just couldn't do it.

For all of you who think that it would be impossible for a gummy bear to lift a fully grown house elf, or fling pastries across the room... I hope you re read the scenario I just described, if only to realize how utterly useless it is to apply logic to this scenario.

I was a bit disappointed in the lack of response to the last chapter. I don't mind criticism, but, the silence makes me wonder whether people even read my story. Which seems contrary to the hit meter for each chapter?

Thank you to those who have reviewed... I appreciate your feedback and encourage you to continue doing so.

Next chapter, the big reveal... The reason why I named this story the way I have, the significance of the feathers... This is the key idea that my entire story evolved from... well it actually evolved from a scene later on, but that scene would not be possible without this concept.

There were a couple things I wanted to mention in my Authors note, but seeing as I'm in desperate need of sleep, I'll cut it short.

Please review, and let me know what you think; good or bad. I like to think I have been fairly good about not asking for reviews, but I wouldn't mind a little more feed back.

Till next time.

Quazi

Chapter 18- Well, don't that beat all...

"Harry? Are you ok mate?" Ron leaned forward, waving his hand in front of my eyes; a slightly concerned frown marring his face.

We were currently in the Gryffindor dorms. The reason my best friend was so concerned for me... Well I wasn't absolutely certain, but I don't believe my face could have looked any more horrified as I stared at the ceiling.

What had me in such a state, one might ask?

"I've bugged it up this time..." I moaned out loud.

"What's wrong mate...?" Ron asked in concern as he kneeled in front of my bed as I continued to stare in horror at the ceiling.

It was as if I could see my own demise within the mortar cracks of our granite roof, Ron took a hesitant look around before whispering...

"Is it... You-Know-Who..." he asked urgently, as he spied Trevor the toad, watching us with his beady toad eyes.

"I wish... him I could handle..." I spoke in defeat... My troubles were far more troublesome than some dark lord waiting in the shadows to off me.

Ron stared at me puzzled. "Something worse than Volde... volde... You-Know-Who?" he asked in disbelief.

"You're having me on mate..." he stated jokingly, but with a little worry laced between each syllable.

He was about to ask me something else when I suddenly I sprung up out of bed.

Ron, who was on my right; leapt aside as I bounced off the mattress. I started to walk towards Dean's bed, then Seamus's, then back to Dean's, then Ron's, and so on and so forth.

Ron looked at me in alarm, not quite sure what to make of my pacing and agitated state.

“Have you ever...” I started. Then stopped as I didn’t know what to say afterwards...

“What I mean to say is...” Again, the words would not flow.

“What is it mate?” Ron asked in concern. The caring eyes and sympathetic smile of my best friend eased my agitated mind faintly. I knew I could trust Ron, he would understand what I was going through, he would take my problem seriously.

I turned to stare at my best friend in the eye; transmitting the seriousness of the situation between our corneas. I could see Ron prepare himself for it. I might as well just blurt it out... I knew I could only say it once.

Taking a deep breath I said...

“I asked Luna to go on a Date.”

My tone was dead serious.

The room was silent. Ron stared at me hard, his face was stone.

Trevor observed us with his beady little eyes, judging us, and condemning us within his toad brain.

I awaited Ron’s verdict, he would have some kind of pearl of wisdom to help me in my time of crisis.

I heard an odd whistling noise emanate from my friend, as if he were a tea kettle and he were about to erupt steam from his ears. He was trembling. My words had severely affected him...

SNORT

Ron’s hands flew up to his face and covered his nose.

My face turned into a scowl as I saw his lips twitch into a smile before they vanished behind his oafish hands.

“It’s not Funny Ron...” I said venomously.

Ron shook his head in agreement. His hands glued to his face as he stared at me.

But I was not to be fooled. I saw the mirth in his eyes.

“This is serious Ron...!” I scolded.

He nodded his head in confirmation; it wasn’t a laughing matter. Although I knew that is what he was about to do.

I took a menacing step toward the redhead...

Quickly his hand went forward, raised with his palms out in a placating manner, his face taking on a more contrite appearance.

I stopped with a scowl on my face. At least he was taking it seriously now.

He calmed himself and stood to his full height. Walking forward, he placed his hands on my shoulders and looked me in the eyes.

In a serious tone, he informed me...

“It’s time I told you... about the Seeker and the snitch.”

His face cracked up in a wide smile.

I decided... it was time to hurt Ron Weasley.

Ron quickly let go of me as I leapt to strangle him. Every now and then he told me tales of the seeker who spent too much time polishing his broom instead of attending to the snitch.

“Get back here Weasley!”

“...But the snitch didn’t like to be held so firmly... it required a gentle Touch...” he hollered as he dodged me.

Trevor let out a croak as he watched us tear through the dormitory.

Everyone was against me.

... ..

I knew I was being melodramatic, but this was a crisis in my eyes.

After I had finally exacted revenge upon Ron, who was surprisingly nimble, I confessed my anxiety over the situation. To Ron’s credit, he only snorted once or twice more.

I retold my tale of Gummy wars and Blood red demon candies that-shall-not-be-named. He seemed more intrigued with the fate of the candy than my crisis.

‘Honestly...’

Bob had survived, pulling a tactical retreat.

The house elves cheered in victory, and proceeded to fret over their lack of pastries.

We were less concerned when we actually looked in the Ice box. There were enough éclairs, puddings, pies, and cupcakes in it to feed a large neighbourhood... for a week.

Apparently the house elves believed in bulk.

It was after our decisive victory, and I had watched Luna float away with a smile that made my heart melt, that I suddenly realized what I had done.

I had asked a girl out.

I had asked a friend out.

I had changed our relationship dramatically.

‘For our first date, was I expected to kiss her? How am I supposed to kiss her?’

‘Do I even know how to kiss? I’ve only done it once. What if that’s the reason why Cho cried. I can’t exactly go and ask her about my technique...’

‘Am I supposed to kiss her at all? Do I give her flowers; where do I get flowers...?’

All these questions and more plagued my mind.

When I revealed my insecurities to Ron... I imagine I got a tad worked up.

Ron, in the end threatened to tell Parvarti if I didn’t calm down. He was a crafty one, I’ll give him that.

After listening to me reiterate my worries, he finally told me...

“Don’t worry so much, just be yourself...” he said soothingly. A benign smile playing across his face.

‘...’

I wanted to strangle him. I didn’t want some Saturday morning, teen drama, crap; I wanted actual advice

Like brew polyjuice potion, steal a hair from a hufflepuff, and flee to Istanbul.

‘Be myself... pfft’

I at least learned one thing.

Never tell a mate that you fancy a girl.

'I don't know what I was thinking.'

... ..

After swearing to myself to never tell Ron anything, ever again - I managed to escape towards the great hall. Sir had not indicated that our training sessions would stop. I did not want to risk his ire over an assumption.

When I had arrived though, it appeared as though there were to be no more training sessions. I was surprised to note that I felt a little disappointed. Sure they had left me exhausted and left me with little to no free time, but they were helpful sessions that left me feeling like I had done something to aid in the war.

I was doing my part, in getting stronger. That was really the most sensible thing I could do short of strapping a bomb to my chest and standing next to Voldemort himself.

"I'm glad to see that you are punctual to these sessions; Tiberius would have it no other way of course" A voice said approvingly from behind me.

Quickly turning, I spotted the violently purple robed figure of Albus Dumbledore.

"Headmaster..." I said in surprise.

'I swore he liked to sneak up on me.'

"Good evening Harry." He greeted.

"I would offer you a candy, but I think you've had your fill of them tonight." The man said knowingly.

"Dobby?" I asked wondering who his informant into my afternoon activities had been.

"Chippy actually..." He said conversationally. As he swept his long beard over his shoulder, and walked deeper into the great hall.

“Come, join me Harry.” He invited.

I followed him stride for stride as he lead me to the head table and sat in his usual seat. I spotted his hand subtly squeeze his wand. His other hand waved, inviting me to sit in the newly conjured chair opposite him.

I had gotten better at spotting subtle actions, and had been startled as I realized I was starting to understand how the adults around me had been performing magic so casually.

Subtle waves and gestures I had always assumed were casual performances of wandless magic were actually diversionary moves to take attention away from the wand they always grasped.

It suitably wowed the younger years, as it had me at that age, and it gave us something to strive towards.

It had become a little bit of a game to me, to spot the wand as the teachers cast their spells.

McGonagall for example, she was the more in plane sight caster, where the wand was always visible but pointed away from the action. Snape liked to keep his dark wood wand close to his robes; which hid it as they rippled around him.

I had started looking for these subtle signs when I realized they helped me anticipate spell fire from my instructors. I had always done it naturally on an instinctive level, but now that I recognized what I had always known, I became a more effective dualist.

Speaking of dualists’...

“Sir, am I not having training with Professor Connelly anymore?” I asked as I sat myself in the ten second old embroidered seat. It felt odd to refer to the man by his actual name instead of sir... I almost forgot what it was.

...the name Sir branded over the image of the man in my head.

“Not tonight I’m afraid, or for the rest of the week for that matter. Tiberius is on assignment and was forced to cut his time short at Hogwarts. That is why you received no notice of his departure.” He explained serenely.

“Sir, I actually came to see you today...” I started. I might as well inform the man about the predicament I was in while we were here.

“Ahh yes that...” He frowned. Not so subtly he waved his wand at the great hall doors which slowly closed with a squelch.

The wall sconces lit up, startling me as I had gotten used to the darkness in the hall.

It felt more like a late night feast, as the house banners waved in the non existent wind. I half expected the students to storm the doors and seat themselves once more.

With one more wave of his wand. The room fizzled an electric blue, the same way the board room had in the citadel.

“About the incident... could you tell me your side of the story Harry?” Dumbledore asked with a resigned tone. He did not sound like he enjoyed this aspect of our conversation.

I needless to say, told him about my encounter with Snape. I decided to include my brief run in within the office as well.

There was a strange hardness to the aged wizards stare as I relayed the facts of the night.

Once I was done, Dumbledore rubbed the bridge of his nose in a tired manner and stared at me apologetically.

“Thank you for clearing that up for me Harry. I find myself owing you an apology once more.” He lamented.

I quirked my eyes at the man.

“Apologise?” I asked.

“What for sir...?”

“I assumed Serverus would keep to his word. I was clearly mistaken. I hope you can forgive me Harry.” He stated resignedly.

“Forgive you...?” I asked. “Can I speak freely sir?”

“Of course Harry, never feel you have to hold yourself back with me.” he invited.

“Thanks...” I said for the invitation to be candid. “...but I can’t see myself needing to forgive you for this. Unless you have some way of controlling every word out of Snapes...”

“Professor Snape...” He interrupted.

“Speaking freely sir...” I replied back pointedly.

His brow creased, and his lips twitched amusedly, at my answer. “Yes of course...” he smiled.

“Anyway, unless you could control every word he said, and did, I don’t see what I have to forgive.” I stated with a smile.

Dumbledore smiled back at me more freely.

I had the feeling he honestly did blame himself for it. It was ludicrous to do so, as even though he was a powerful wizard, he couldn’t do everything. I wondered to myself though...

‘Is this the kind of life he led? A life of constant expectation. Could the pressure, of being seen as the man who would know what to do; lead to a man who would feel the blame for the most infinitesimal of failures? And what of the grander snafus?’

‘At the end of the day, he was still but one man...’ It deeply unsettled me to think about; as the man had often said, I reminded him of himself when he observed me.

More out of steering the conversation away from such an awkward subject, I asked...

"Anyway, what happens now, that... Professor Snape..." I acquiesced.

He granted me a smile in return.

"... Let on to what I've been up to?" I asked.

"An excellent question Harry. I still maintain that keeping this arrangement a secret; the best course of action. For now, you and I will continue to deny the existence of such training. The rest of the staff has been informed that they are to do so as well." He stated.

"And Malfoy and the rest... surely they'll tell their parents." I asked.

Lucius was still trapped by all accounts in Azkaban, but that didn't seem like it would stop the information from passing into Voldemorts hands.

"That does pose a problem I admit. I had hoped Voldemort and his Death Eaters would assume you untrained, and that that surprise would work in your favour the next time you encountered them..." He said with a frown. "For now, continue to deny, and should one of the students in question approach you, use your best judgement." He stated.

"And of course inform me soon after word." He added on absentmindedly.

I nodded, already knowing that there was little we could do, short of imprisoning them within their own rooms and confiscating their wands. Which while a pleasant thought, would not sit well with the board of governors, let alone the wizarding world.

"I believe that is settled, unless you have any other questions?" Dumbledore remarked.

"Actually there is one..." I stated.

Dumbledore looked at me inquisitively.

“What happens next time I go to Defence? I dropped potions specifically because I learned a long time ago that we, Snape and I, could not be in the same room together; as this incident proved...” I wasn’t above saying ‘I told you so...’

“...I don’t want to have to drop defence as well.” I said with worry. I had genuinely enjoyed the subject. It was rare for me to find a course I could really feel a passion about, but defence had done that for me, despite most of my instructors trying to kill me at one point or another.

“Ah yes...” Dumbledore said with firm eyes. I rarely saw anger in the man but I saw it now. It was laced between disappointment and something else I couldn’t quite place my finger on.

“... I had initially given Serverus the chance to teach Defence as a trial run as it were. His interest has remained fairly constant over the past few years, and I decided to offer him a chance at the subject. I am disappointed to say that he has failed that test, and I will not be offering him such a chance for some time.” The man said with clear disappointment in his voice. “A shame really, as there are few who would wish to teach that subject, but many who vie for a chance as a potions professor...” he remarked.

It was the most bizarre thing, but as much as I despised the man, I felt... sorry for him?

He had clearly lost the position all on his own, but I couldn’t help but think that if I had not been in the class, he would have been able to keep his position as a Defence instructor.

Did I think the man a competent teacher... no.

Did I think him a caring and sensitive human being... Hell no.

Did I want to see his dreams crushed... surprisingly, no?

“How long, until he gets another chance?” I asked casually. I was morbidly curious to see how long Dumbledore would punish the man for this... incident.

“I would say, about two years.” Dumbledore remarked while watching me.

“Two years...” I repeated while allowing my eyes to wander back to look the man in his own aged pair. I was annoyed to see his infernal twinkle present.

“Are you perhaps feeling sympathy for Professor Snape...?” he asked with a smile.

“What ... no.” I denied right away.

Stopping, I frowned at my own acting skills, as even I didn’t believe that.

“Maybe...” I admitted.

“You are perhaps also noting the amount of time he will have until I offer him the opportunity again...” he coaxed.

I in fact was... In about two years, I would no longer be a student at Hogwarts. I didn’t like the fact that I was the determining factor in any mans life. Ironic, considering my fate...

I didn’t need to answer Dumbledore as he stared at me in that knowing way of his.

“In truth Harry... yes, I am delaying his appointment to the defence post because of you.” He admitted.

I was a little surprised, I had hoped I was being full of my self, and really it wall all a happy coincident. Also, I had not expected him to admit it to me so bluntly.

“The fact that you feel any sympathy for Professor Snape at all does warm my heart-and I believe I can surmise what may be passing

through your head. I admit, I am no expert on the way you think, but I believe I have gotten to know you well enough to take a guess..." he said with a boastful smile.

I wanted to huff and tell him he probably wouldn't but the man had an uncanny sense into the workings of the people around him.

He most likely knew what I was experiencing and that aggravated me. 'Blasted telepath.'

"I am guessing that you feel some slight guilt over the matter, perhaps even a little shame..." he stated with a smile.

I wanted to tell him he was way off, that I felt nothing for the man and I was glad that I would never have to see him regularly again.... but I just couldn't bring myself to lie. Instead I kept my surly silence.

"Yes... well, let me remind you Harry. At the end of the day, the knowledge you gain, and the abilities you master, will help save an entire society... I at first had hoped you and Severus would attain some form of respect or companionship, thus healing some old wounds in the process, and making you both all the stronger... but something's were never meant to be I suppose." He said morosely.

'Was Albus Dumbledore confiding in me...?' It certainly sounded like it. I sat up a little straighter and turned my head a little to observe the man as he spoke.

"I do not wish to burden you, but I believe you already realize the tremendous responsibility you carry. Knowing this, I must prioritize what is more important. Your education or one mans ambition... There are other factors of course, but yours takes precedent in this matter." He admitted.

I did feel a little better...but a lot sicker after hearing the man justify himself.

The guilt still remained, but that was a part of who I was. It was the part that made me so similar to the man in front of me.

But I did take some solace in the fact that the very same man was also taking my education and life so seriously... I knew I would be prepared when the time finally came.

“Anyway, this is not actually what I came here for...” Dumbledore said after a comfortable silence.

I turned my head fully to him and waited for him to explain.

“I actually wanted to assess your training. Consider this a pop quiz as it were...” he said with a smile.

I remained calm on the outside but I was panicking on the inside... ‘Albus Dumbledore was about to evaluate me. He was about to criticize my every step and motion.’ I never did well on Pop quizzes... I was a bit of a worrier.

“What say we make this sporting shall we? If you should win, 50 points to Gryffindor. I don’t want to toot my own horn but to beat me at your age would require tremendous dedication...” he said affably.

Something about the way the man said it... It raised a flag within my mind.

He was smiling confidently at me; his posture was flawless and something about him screamed power. The man was a master at projecting an image to the world. And yet now he was projecting power and strength... He never usually displayed those sides of his persona unless he was facing death eaters or trying to... intimidate.

This was part of the test. He was trying to see how I would react under stress, whether I would make stupid mistakes.

I had almost fallen for it... ‘Crafty bugger.’

I stood up straighter and looked at him with confidence as I stood my ground.

He smiled with a twinkle that I thought meant he was proud of me. He nodded his head and stood along side me and waved his wand this time in an arc at the tables.

The house tables immediately flew to either end of the hall bordering up windows in the process of giving us an obscenely large space to duel in.

Dumbledore and I immediately strode forward, him taking a stand near the teachers table, the moonlight from the only unobstructed window, illuminating his form mysteriously.

I walked towards the entrance doors with my wand at the ready.

Turning around once I had marked my start, I faced the man with my arm at my side.

I didn't do any fancy sword wielding poses with my wand, as it no longer mattered whether I waved my wand in the direction of my opponent to cast a spell. I had reached a level where I could point my wand at my own head and scream stupefy and watch as my opponent succumbed to my spell instead.

My pose was about posturing and comfort. I thought I looked particularly intimidating as I stood tall and proud with my wand held firm at my side, and my arms did not tire from holding it up high waiting to cast like I once had. Dumbledore would not be intimidated by me, but my own projected confidence boosted my own... telling me that I could do this.

Dumbledore nodded approvingly.

"First to be disarmed or unconscious..." He invited.

"Agreed." I said preparing myself for the challenge.

Then without as much as a sound, or countdown.

He vanished.

I couldn't help but let panic take hold of my mind for a moment.

This wasn't the distorting ripple associated with a disillusionment charm, nor was he covered by an invisibility cloak. He had simply, disappeared.

I spun on my heel casting a strong shield charm, and searched my surroundings.

I could not spot him. Calming my mind a little, I dropped my shield as an idea formed in my head. The shield would protect me from many spells, but would not allow me to attack while I was within it.

As my shield fell, I quickly disillusioned myself, ignoring the cold dribbling sensation that encompassed me, and started waving my wand about as if I was performing a diagnostic spell.

I was not doing any such thing in reality.

One of the drawbacks of disillusionment was that in reality, it worked more like a chameleon skin, projecting an image of the surrounding environment rather than making a person truly invisible. Any motion at all caused a ripple like effect that could be caught by an observant eye.

That was what I was counting on.

My wand movements were exact and a little exaggerated as I pretended to cast diagnostic charms to track the man's location, when in reality, I was conjuring silently using wandless skills.

The wandless magic was only used to dissolve my conjuration as I created it, as I was still weary of overtaxing myself.

Immediately, spell fire started to aim for me from all directions. If this had been a few months earlier I might have feared Dumbledore had somehow managed to find a way to duplicate himself as the spells were from all directions, even the ceiling where my conjuration lay suspended.

I nearly lost my concentration as I was forced to duck and dodge the spells.

Some of them appeared to be stunners, and banishers, some were unknown, others were actually just sparks and fireworks meant to confuse me.

No one could say the man wasn't talented.

If anyone were to look in the great hall, they would see spell fire and magic being directed at a moving mirage that swerved and danced to avoid being struck.

Finally I finished my conjuration. I had become much better at the art than when I had begun, but I was not a master by any means. What I had planned took time to create, as I was thinking big.

I wanted to shock the headmaster, spot him, and perhaps maybe even beat him. I was an optimist.

Now that I had finally finished my conjuration, I could finally go on the offensive.

Quickly I managed to conjure thirty or forty ping pong balls and banished them in all directions.

Then while the headmaster thought I was sending out the balls to help spot him I dropped my disillusionment, for both me and my conjuration.

I reappeared somewhere in the corner of the room by the front, with a smirk that I imagine made the headmaster pause.

I also liked to imagine his eyes might have widened fractionally as he looked up only to see hundreds of gallons of red paint falling from the ceiling.

I banished a section of paint away from me and keenly observed my surroundings. Hoping Dumbledore would follow my lead...

Like before, the world slowed down and I watched as the scene before me moved at half speed.

A section of paint not five meters away from me was starting to vanish...

I now knew where Dumbledore stood.

Pointing my wand and my hand at the spot I directed my magic at him while sending stunners and percussion blasts at him. My spell fire formed an arc of as it swept the distance between us to aim for him.

There was no way he could dodge it...

I was surprised though when my magic passed right through the spot... It wasn't even reflected away by a shield... it simply splashed harmlessly across the opposite wall as if Dumbledore were not even there...

I knew moments later why as the paint hit the floor.

On the opposite side of the room, 20 feet away, with his wand arm pointed at me covered in paint that dripped off his still invisible figure, stood Albus Dumbledore.

Paint dripped away from his body; I could make out his beard as the paint seeped through it and dripped off his robes.

He was only partially visible as I could still see through some parts of him that had avoided being drenched by the red liquid.

I swore his blood red face smirked at me as he started firing spells.

Using Lemans method I quickly fired back, intercepting spells and ricocheting them away from me.

Now was the true fight.

Luckily for me, Dumbledore did not try and do what Snape had done, and tried his hand at beating me in a battle of wills. I was sure I could not win if that were the case.

He simply let the spells hit each other and started upon a new series of attacks. I mainly focused on my shield balls as I was quickly moved into the defensive once more.

I was proud to say I was holding my own. He was probably going easy on me but still, it was an ego boost none the less.

We swirled and pivoted around each other, trying to asses each others weaknesses. I was lucky as I had my wandless skills to fall back on to help me defend my self as I found it significantly easier to block spells using this skill.

My eyes spotted a low hanging wall scone and a crazy idea struck.

I almost decided against it until I finally noticed how thick the paint was and that there was at least a half inch puddle we both wadded through.

Quickly deciding, I wormed my way closer to the wall scone that hung firmly by the doorway to the hall and enacted my idea.

I gathered my magic for a quick burst and fired a powerful banisher at the floor, while shielding my self with my wandless spells.

I staggered momentarily from the barrage of spells that were not intercepted but smiled as the wave of paint formed heading for the headmaster. It was a large wave, at least as big as me; as I had used some magic to ensure the wave was at least as tall... effectively blocking me from sight.

Quickly I jumped while simultaneously shooting a sticking charm at the wall, and disillusioned myself once more.

I almost cheered as it worked.

There I was, wand extended, invisible, hanging from the wall like Spiderman...

My left arm and leg were firmly stuck to the wall and I couldn't fall off if I tried. My wand was pointed, invisible as well at the wave.

Dumbledore cast a shield that blocked the liquid from impacting him once more, as the liquid was still distracting when it hit... something I had hoped would stun the man when I conjured it up in the first place.

I watched as it splashed against his shield charm and formed a 7 foot high bubble.

I was going to wait until the man dropped his shield, and then when he was close enough to me, I was going to stun him.

'I might just win yet.' I cheered in disbelief.

The only problem with my plan was that I had to stay perfectly still, lest he spot my distortion.

I waited for what felt like an eternity till finally, the shield fell, taking with it the layer of paint.

I waited to see the paint falling back on the man inside as there was no part of the bubble that was not doused in the thick liquid...

But I was to be surprised as the paint fell... only to hit the floor.

Dumbledore had vanished again... he had not even been in his own shield...

I made my first and last mistake, as my wand hand dropped an inch in surprise.

I knew no more as a stunner washed over me.

... ..

Suddenly I awoke to the familiar sensation of an enervate being splashed against my body.

I gasped in breath and idly noticed that I was still hanging from the wall.

Looking around the room I noticed that all the paint had vanished, leaving the room as clean as when I had first arrived; including the paint that had doused the now visible and smiling man in front of me.

"Well I must say Harry; that was marvellous. I can see why Tiberius praises you as he does." Dumbledore boomed brightly as he looked at me not a few feet away.

"What... how did you..." I asked intelligently. I was utterly confused. 'How had the man vanished once more...? I should have had him.'

Absentmindedly, I unstuck myself from the wall and landed at a crouch in front of the beaming man.

"You forget Harry, while I could not see you when you banished the paint... clever that by the way... you could not see me as I vanished the paint from my already invisible self and dodged." He said with that all too familiar twinkle in his eye.

I could have moaned at such a stupid mistake. I wanted to pull a Dobby and strike myself for making such a foolish mistake.

"Afterwards, I simply borrowed from you by creating a shield at the spot I had been and let the paint hit it as I searched the room for you." He explained proudly as he absentmindedly created another bubble a few feet away to demonstrate.

I had let my hand sag as I wondered where Dumbledore had been. Such a small movement, only to be caught moments later was quite impressive.

"30 points to you regardless, I am very impressed Harry." He praised.

I couldn't help but feel pleased at the praise and sheepishly smiled under his smile.

The rest of the evening passed far too quickly for me, as Dumbledore took the time to teach me each and every spell he had cast at me that night. Including his invisibility.

Needless to say, it was the best lesson I had ever had.

... ..

The next day was a little less jovial for me. I had hoped that I could avoid Hermione long enough to think up a reasonable excuse for Snape's loose lips... but that was not to be.

I had woken that morning only to find Hermione waiting for me with a stern frown upon her face.

She did not say anything as I greeted her, but she had not redirected her glare in any other direction than my own.

As we walked towards the great hall, she continued to frown upon me until I could not stand it one second more and stopped and pulled her into an empty classroom.

Ron who had followed me downstairs only to see the angry scowl upon Hermione's face; left us to our own devices as he sent us ahead to the great hall as he went back to get his forgotten quills. He knew the argument would happen and he did not want to be present for it... I couldn't blame him.

I secured the room, using the same spell Dumbledore had used, which had earned a raised eye from Hermione who continued to look at me with an angry judgemental frown upon her face.

"What is it Hermione..." I said rhetorically, already knowing why she was upset with me.

I half expected her to remain silent, but she decided to get right into it.

“Am I not your friend anymore Harry?” She asked angrily. Her arms crossed and her face a scowl as she stared at me.

I had to admit I was not expecting that...

“What, where did you get that from...?” I asked alarmed. Her familiar voice inside my mind berated me, telling me that I had brought this upon myself by my selfish actions.

The Real Hermione stared at me and took a breath as she seemed to prepare herself...

“What else am I supposed to think? You never study with me anymore, always going off to your room of requirement to study on your own. You spend all your time with Luna Lovegood, or Neville or Ron, and you’re so secretive...” She spoke angrily.

“We talked about this Hermione... I need my privacy.” I tried to remind her. I didn’t bother to justify the rest as to an extent I had been avoiding her. Or at least I could see why she thought I was. I barely saw her except for D.A. meetings or class.

“Don’t Give me that...” she said venomously. “ I was willing to accept the fact that you needed your privacy for stuff like your grades or your personal life, but you’re hiding bigger things than that. Don’t deny it.” She practically yelled.

I wasn’t sure what to say to that, as here was one of my best friends and she was very upset. And she had every right to be as well.

I decided she deserved some answers.

“You’re right to an extent... I have been keeping some things from you.” I admitted. It took more of an effort to admit that to her than I suspected it would have for any of my other close friends.

I don’t think she expected me to admit that, as I saw the surprise in her eyes and some of her anger diminished.

"But..." I continued already knowing that what I was about to say would not sit well with her.

"... I have reasons for not telling you everything. You're not the only one who doesn't know. The secrets I keep are secret for a reason, and as much as I value our friendship, I have to keep them a secret as my life is at stake if I don't"

I was right to say think that she would not understand. Her indignation flared at the clear denial.

"See this is what I mean. You don't keep secrets like that from your best friends!" She scolded, walking forward a step to berate me.

The sky outside was cloudy and grey and that added another layer of gloom to the room as I watched my friendship start to crumble.

"The world isn't like that Hermione; I don't have the luxury of telling you everything and expecting it to turn out alright in the end. You have to understand that you knowing some things are not beneficial to me." I defended. I wanted to get angry to feel indignant that she was demanding answers but I understood that I was just as responsible for bringing us to this point as she was.

"Bull!" She flared.

"This has to do with Voldemort... Doesn't it?" She seethed as she stared at me.

"I can't answer that..." I said. I had a feeling she was also recalling the incident in the citadel... when Dumbledore had almost revealed too much about the office incident and the prophecy. I wasn't going to bother to lie, but I wasn't going to tell her either.

"How can you be so selfish...?" She practically screamed in frustration as she tore her eyes away from me. She spun on her heels and paced the room like a jungle cat.

"Selfish... how the hell am I being selfish?" I asked indignantly.

"You're hiding secrets that could help defeat him. You're not the only one in danger with him around. I'm a muggleborn, Ron's a 'Blood Traitor', were at the top of his list...Have you forgotten that!" she said indignantly.

I stared at her for a second letting her words wash over me...

"What are you dumb...?" I asked. "The only reason you two would ever be in danger of him, is because of me in the first place. I doubt he even knows your names, what makes you think you two would be at the top of his 'list'." I asked in incredulity.

That was her worst argument yet. She was grasping at straws now.

She huffed angrily... a little surprised I had brushed her argument aside so easily.

"Is this what it's about, protecting us... do you think we can't handle ourselves..." She scolded building up a new steam.

"That's enough!" I boomed.

I had had it, she was going to keep trying to wear me down, to prove to me that she deserved to know, and I had already decided that was not going to happen.

Hermione stared at me wide eyed as I had never truly yelled at her like that. I had gone on an upset tirade about how frustrated I had been, I had been indignant when she had insulted me, but I had never asserted such anger towards her directly. I imagined it might have been like when Dumbledore had yelled furiously at Minister Fudge. I could feel the disappointment and fury coursing through my veins.

Hermione for her part, shut up.

"I am not telling you what you want to know... I suggest you deal with it, as that's final." I told her strictly.

I strode towards the door already starting to open it...

“Harry James Potter, Don’t you dare” She started.

A window pane shattered.

My anger had returned full force. I turned around to stare at my friend pointedly.

The window had exploded inwards but thankfully on the other side of the room so as to not hurt her. She was in shock over my clearly displayed rage.

“No, Don’t you Dare Hermione...” I warned.

“... No more, I’ve been patient, I’ve tried to see your side of this, but you will not hear me say it again. Do not pry into my secrets. If you can’t handle that then that’s your own problem.” I glared at her hard.

Her mouth was agape at the end of my speech.

I turned around and stormed out of the room while shooting a reparo that violently repaired the window and made my way to the room of requirement.

I was going to see about smashing things for the next hour to work my temper down.

... ..

I had finally left the room, the layer of dust from all the brittle clay sculptures of my own head vanished as I passed through the doorway.

The room had sensed my true need to punish myself as I smashed my own head in with a beaters bat till my arms were as limp as noodles.

The first class should have ended by now. Hagrid had rescheduled us for a morning class. I knew the kind half-giant wouldn’t mind that I had missed one class.

I had decided to go back to my dormitory and bury myself in runes and potions work as my schedule was clear until transfigurations in the afternoon. It was a light day for me...

As I got closer and closer to my common room; where my equipment lay, buried in my extremely well protected trunk, I couldn't help but feel saddened at the state of my friendship with the girl.

I wasn't entirely sure where we stood now, I had basically confirmed that I was keeping secrets from her, secrets that had to do with Voldemort himself, and I had yelled at her.

She had every right to call our friendship off. I wondered though whether that would have been a good thing in the end.

I was right when I said that she was only at risk of being in danger, by being my friend. Would it really be so bad, I had been alone most of my life. If I were to have no friends, everything would become so much simpler.

I would have no one demanding of me information. I would have no one to agonize over.

In a way Dudley Dursley had done me a favour. In school together, he had kept me from making any friends; and now, I had no reason to return to Surrey. Something I considered quite the blessing.

I quickly shoved those thoughts away. I wasn't prepared to go to such an extreme... yet.

I was about to speak the password to the Fat Lady, when I felt a cold hand grasp my shoulder.

I quickly whirled around to see the angry face of Severus Snape.

I had seen hate in his eyes before, but there was a new level of malintent lurking beneath the surface now.

"Potter..." He snarled.

“Sir...” I spoke with distaste. What was he doing here? Wasn’t he supposed to have a class?

He looked at me for a second before pushing me to my right and shoving me forward.

“To my office...” He barked. I regained my footing from his shove and looked at him angrily.

“Do not touch me again sir...” I warned. His features jerked at my own snarl.

He appeared to have wanted to say something before I abruptly complied and started walking towards his office.

I was still a little angry over my Hermione issues and to have to deal with Snape... It did not make a happy Potter out of me.

I half expected Snape to comment on my remark, but he didn’t as he marched a step behind me like a guard leading a prisoner to their cell.

I probably should have told myself to calm down or not let the man get to me... but I was on the brink of something. My anger and agitation was doing something strange to me.

I could feel an odd swirling feeling starting to build within me. My magic was starting to react.

My core was starting to react...

‘Of all times, now it decides to do something.’

“Stop” Snape barked abruptly.

I walked to a lazy stop not letting the man think I would stop immediately at his command like a dog on a leash.

I turned an unimpressed eye toward the man as instead of his office I stood outside the mans classroom.

“Get inside.” He ordered.

I almost sneered at the man as I looked at him like the filth I thought him to be.

Instead, I opened the door to find myself standing in a class filled with students.

Specifically, the sixth year class.

Specifically Hermione Granger and Draco Malfoy.

I knew there was something I was forgetting. The two looked at me in surprise.

Hermione’s frown turned into an irritated scowl, while Draco’s became a smirk as if he knew something I didn’t.

“What are you doing here Potter, I thought you failed potions...” He taunted. There was something else in his voice... he knew why I was dragged here.

I never got to reply back, as instead...

“Quiet Mr Malfoy.” Snape barked in a tone laced with impatience.

Needless to say I was not expecting that. It was like Vernon Dursley telling Dudley he was grounded.

Malfoy reddened noticeably but quickly apologized while keeping an eye on me and his professor.

“Potter, stand by my desk.” He ordered.

“What is this about sir...?” I finally asked.

“Now.” He commanded.

The man was very unstable today. I had a feeling he would probably be willing to manhandle me in front of his students if I pushed him far enough...

I quirked an eye at him and sauntered over to the spot indicated, only to casually stand waiting for further instruction.

He glared at me hatefully before turning around and yelling at a startled class.

"Everyone stop what you're doing immediately."

"But sir, we need another four minutes to cool the..." A Slytherin protested hesitantly.

"Do As I say!" He barked.

Immediately every knife and stirring rod was placed at the side of each cauldron regardless of the potions state.

Snape stared at his class with hawkish eyes.

"Earlier this morning, my seventh years found there armadillo bile replaced with willow sap. The resulting explosion and loss of a valuable potions ingredient has left me very unhappy." He explained.

I noticed a glimmer in a particular student's eye.

Malfoy already knew.

"The fact that the perpetrator was cheeky enough to leave a calling card in the shape of a floating green lighting bolt left me less amused." Snape said angrily while turning to glare at me.

Malfoy turned as well; his eye's sparkled with malice. Needless to say, I believed I was framed.

"I didn't do it..." I said calmly with a quirked eye. He wasn't going to get me acting like I was guilty by squirming under his stare. I was not

known for pranks, and as much as I detested Snape, everyone knew that I was set up.

“Do not think me a fool Potter; it reeks of your attention seeking ways. So like your farther you are.” He condemned.

I was surprised to note that I wasn't really affected by the remark as I once had been.

Usually I would have been filled with reckless rage at such a comment. I only spared a pitying look at the man and said...

“If you suspect me, I suggest you talk to my head of house or Professor Dumbledore.” I suggested.

I had nothing further to say. I would do what I should have done along time ago.

His Slytherin's only had to ever go to their head of house to escape punishment. I would use my own; she was there for a reason after all.

Snape turned an irritated eye towards me, as I doubt he expected such an answer.

“Hiding behind the headmaster are we.” He mocked.

Some of the Slytherin's sniggered, some of the Hufflepuff's who had surprisingly large numbers teetered angrily at the comment. Dumbledore was still Dumbledore and he inspired loyalty like a plague, the dead.

“If you have issues with the headmaster, I suggest you discuss them with him.” I remarked while glaring hatefully at the man.

I wasn't going to react improperly in front of a classroom where he could exaggerate my behaviour.

He was already digging his own grave. I suspected he had been informed that he was not to teach defence anymore... and he was taking the news badly.

I swore his arm twitched closer to his body. I imagined he was a hairs breath from trying to curse me. I was hoping he would try.

My core was even beating violently, as if it two wanted to throttle the man.

I suspected that I was getting close to accessing it, but by the way the headmaster explained it, I should not have been able to. I was supposed to be in a calm state of mind to do that... I was anything but, as I was angry and preparing for a fight.

If I did access it, what was I supposed to do then...? We had not covered this in our lessons.

Snape angrily twirled and told the class to bottle what they had finished brewing.

“Mr. Potter has just volunteered to test out your antidotes to the various poisons I had assigned you.” Snape announced to the classes and my own surprise.

“But sir... they haven’t cooled yet...” Susan Bones announced in my defence.

“Do not question me... 15 points from hufflepuff.” He barked. That did not stop many of the students from trying to come to my rescue. Hermione included.

Most of the Slytherin’s however smiled happily. There were some, who didn’t really care, and one or two who did not seem like they really didn’t approve; but most like Malfoy could only beam at the announcement.

“No.”

Everyone silenced as spoke the most taboo word to ever be spoken within these walls.

“What did you say Potter?” Snape warned.

"I said no." I repeated.

I vaguely remembered the man threatening me with this before, but this time, I feared what he might allow as he now hated me like no other time before. That's not to say I would have let the man poison me under any other circumstance.

"Are you scared Mr. Potter. I thought you were a brave Gryffindor. The Hero of the wizarding world..." He mocked.

"If you're so keen to prove your bravery, you drink it sir. I'm not." I replied back defiantly.

Snape's eyes flashed. He whipped out a vial and held it towards me.

"Drink the vial..." he ordered.

"No..." I said while I noted the orange concoction. It looked like juice, but I suspected it was anything but.

"Do as I say Mr. Potter or you face expulsion..." He threatened.

"Get the headmaster then, and he can expel me in front of us all." I goaded. I wasn't stupid enough to fall for that.

The man snapped...

"Everyone Out!" He yelled.

The students didn't need to be told twice as everyone quickly exited.

Hermione spared me a blank look. I could see trace amounts of worry laced between her emotionless mask. But she vanished with the rest of the students.

I made my way to the exit as well before the door slammed shut in my face.

Turning around I spotted the sheeting Potions Professor.

"You dare disrespect me in front of my students Potter!" He yelled.

"You dare try and poison me Professor?" I asked back.

"You will be quiet potter if you know what's good for you..." he commanded.

His greasy hair masked part of his face as he looked down upon me.

"Fifty points from Gryffindor and detention for a month." He barked.

I wasn't about to spend an entire month doing who knew what with the man supervising.

"I will not do anything with you until I speak with Professor Dumbledore..." I remarked.

It was obvious to me that the man was seeking retribution... If Snape thought I would let that happen, then he was in for a rude surprise.

"So like your farther, hiding behind the headmasters robe like a child. I had hoped the man had outgrown his need to favour Arrogant Potters but Apparently I was mistaken." He condemned.

That did hit a bit close to home. 'Is that what was happening.' My relationship with the man was not the average student headmaster relationship.

'No.' Snape was trying to get to me; the headmaster needs me as much as I need him to fight Voldemort. If I had a closer relationship with the man than the average student, then so be it; Snape was the one with the problem...

"Are we done here?" I asked angrily.

"We are done here when I say we are..." Snape seethed. I was not acting at all like the man expected me to be. Some of it was my new attitude but some of it I liked to think was maturity. The old me, the one Snape knew, would have snapped long ago...

“Do you think yourself special Potter? You have the headmaster and the pampered fools of this world convinced you are some hero, I am not fooled, you are a nothing, a worthless...”

I flinched as that was a word uncle Vernon liked to use a lot in reference to me...

“Vile...”

Petunia Dursley... My core was practically begging me to attack him.

“Orphan who killed those around him with his foolishness.” The man finished.

That one hit very close to home. I was teetering over the edge of the precipitous, one last step and I could take the plunge and God only knew what would happen then. Needless to say that remark had earned a response.

“And you are nothing but a greasy haired jealous death eater who likes to torment children. How does it feel to be a waste of flesh that leaches off of society... sir?” I bit back.

That had done it.

Snape practically tore his wand from his side and pointed at me.

This was the moment my core had been waiting for.

The world slowed down once more, my vision cleared, and I watched the man start to form an ominously yellow spell at the end of his wand.

My core was beating that violent beat that synced up with my heart beat and it demanded I offer it something.

Out of instinct I sent it my rage.

My Core exploded from its tight cocoon like cage and spread to the furthest reaches of my body. I could feel the power surge through me

like no other before. It passed through my hands and into my wand and I felt the rightness of the two... joined at last.

Suddenly my back got heavier... my arms stronger; as if my bones had turned to steel and an unknown source of magic gushed forward like wind knocking a wide eyed Snape back.

The world suddenly returned to normal speed and I could just make out the perturbing eyes of a shocked man, before he slammed into the stone wall and crumpled like a rag doll.

I stared at him confused.

‘What the hell just happened...?’ I wondered.

Taking a cautious step forward I felt an odd sensation as my limbs knocked against the potions supply cupboard.

This was strange for the fact that I was in the centre of the room and the potions supply cupboard was 5 feet away from me to my right.

And my arms were at my side.

So that meant I was receiving sensations from a limb that shouldn't be there.

I realized I was feeling two sets of sensations that had not been there... it was the oddest thing. Hesitantly I looked to my right and stared wide eyed.

Feathers... Black feathers... Black Shiny feathers were rubbing against the potions cupboard.

The black, shiny feather was attached to a giant ebony wing.

My wings Twitched in alarm as twirled in shock.

I was shocked as I realized I had caused my wings to twitch... I had Freaking Wings!

“What the Hell!” I cried out.

Since when did people gain wings all of a sudden?

Magic smagic... this was not normal.

I was unbelievably irritated as I pulled my wings closer to my body.

I was irritated as I realized should not have known how to do that... I was controlling my wings as if I had always had them. That shouldn't be possible.

You know what else shouldn't be possible... Me, Having Wings!

I was fairly sure I was freaking out.

Looking over to the Potions professor I wondered whether I should leave him like he was.

I noted that he was still breathing, so I had at least not killed him... which I supposed was a good thing.

Quickly deciding I sent a stupefy using my wandless magic, ensuring his continued unconsciousness.

The magic streamed out of my easily. It had never been so easy before.

I had just barely thought about casting the spell before it was done.

This was starting to get weird... what was I saying.... I had Wings!

I thought about vanishing my wings... getting rid of them, but no dice... they were still there.

Was I stuck with the things for the rest of my life; I didn't want to go around sporting a pair of feathery limbs.

Uncle Vernon's voice popped out of no where and reminded me that I was a freak.

Idly I wondered whether the man had seen this coming some how.

I certainly was a freak... there was no denying that, all one had to do was take a look at my wingspan and note that I had one.

Frantic, I tried to take my shirt off and wear them over my wings when I noted that my clothing was hanging tattered from my body.

The accursed wings had torn my robes off. These were my favourite robes too, but now they lay at my feet in tatters, mocking me in their destruction.

Quickly I tried to mend them... I managed a half decent job, but now I struggled with trying to put them on.

Somehow I willed my wings to wrap around my body and transfigured my robes into a poncho like robe that covered my entire top half.

I was irritated to note that the wings wrapped around me made my top half look as big as Dudley with the scrawny knobbly knees I had always had.

I looked utterly ridiculous.

Shooting a disgruntled frown at the unconscious potions master, as I blamed him for my current situation; I covered myself and stepped outside. I was relieved to note that I was alone in the corridor.

Placing a locking charm on the door, as I didn't want anyone to get inside before Dumbledore dealt with the man, I sped away, and up toward the headmaster's office.

I idly wondered whether I could fly with the things, but quickly told myself to worry about getting rid of them first.

I was irritated to note that no matter how many times I tried to perform the disillusionment charm on myself my wings would not vanish.

My clothes vanished with the rest of me but a floating pair of curled wings remained.

The things were resistant to my magic... Why did fate hate me?

I un-disillusioned myself and ran as fast as I could avoiding students and teachers.

Finally making my way to the gargoyle I ran the last few meters away only to be stopped as the gargoyle refused to move as it usually did.

"Move..." I cried in distress.

It didn't so much as budge. Resigning myself to guessing I started calling out names of candies. When I had guessed gummy bears twice I practically growled in anger.

I slammed my fist down hard on the gargoyle and was shocked to note that I had cracked it.

I had cracked the thousand year old 'stone' Gargoyle.

This added to my 'what the hell' moment I was having.

I also noted that somehow, I had shifted the gargoyle as I had hit it.

Startled, I hesitantly started to push the stone guardian towards its left.

I would have been happier if it had not worked.

But ever so gradually, the thing slid away. Finally I pushed it far enough that I could squeeze through towards the other side near the staircase.

I technically should not have been able to do that.

As I was a malnourished, knobby kneed 16 year old who while being trained by order of the phoenix taskmasters, could barely beat Neville in an arm wrestling competition.

Adding another impossibility to the list, I sprinted up the stairs towards the door and entered, with out so much as knocking or waiting for an invitation.

“Sir I...” I stopped talking as I turned around to spot Professor McGonagall, Professor Flitwick, and an unknown first year student seated opposite Professor Dumbledore who looked at me in surprise.

“Mr. Potter, we are in a meeting.” Professor McGonagall said grumpily at my rude entrance.

I blushed but I knew my issues were much more important than whatever the students was.

“Yes Mam, I’m sorry Mam... But this is an emergency and I have to talk with professor Dumbledore immediately.” Answered bravely.

Professor McGonagall looked at me with a raised brow. “Can it not wait a few moments; this is an important matter we are discussing.” She asked.

I noted the tear stained face of the first year Ravenclaw, and couldn’t help but let my heart melt at her cherubic pout. But then I remembered that I had wings and knew that whatever issue she had could probably wait a few moments.

“I suppose, but this is an emergency...” I stared at professor Dumbledore and let my eyes display the level of anxiety I was experiencing...

Dumbledore stared at me and nodded.

“Mr Potter, Please follow the stares up to my quarters and I will be with you in a moment.” He instructed.

I nodded quickly and bolted up the stairs like a niffler after gold.

Entering the room, I barely noticed the wide opulent white sheeted bed. The Love seat to my right, or the tea set and table to my left.

I was still frantic over the situation I was in...

Looking around the room I noted the bookshelves and minor trinkets I assumed were personal possessions.

There was a single picture frame by the bed that on any other occasion might have intrigued me, but at the moment left me apathetic at best as I paced back and forth waiting for the man.

What felt like hours but was probably minutes, the door finally creaked open to reveal the man I had been waiting forever for.

"Harry, What is the..." He never got to finish his statement as I let my wings unfurl to their full length and pointed at them with my thumb.

"I have Wings....!" I exclaimed.

I normally would have enjoyed seeing the shocked look upon the mans face as he stared at me with my new appendages. But instead I started to ramble on and on about what had happened to me, mentioning Snape and Hermione, what I was looking forward to having for breakfast, my theory that Malfoy switched the armadillo bile and my battle with the potions professor.

Somewhere along the course of my explanation, Professor Dumbledore had sat himself on his bed as I continued to pace and looked at me with a slightly dumb look upon his usually wise old face.

"... And then, some how I can move the things... I shouldn't know how to do that...When I try to get rid of them though.., I can't. I don't even know how I got them in the first place..." finally I plopped down on the couch opposite the man and retracted my left wing.

"And they itch like crazy..." I finished as I started to scratch at a spot that had been irritating me since I got them.

As I continued to scratch I finally started to pay attention to my surroundings and noted the fact that Dumbledore had not said a word since I revealed them.

He continued to stare at me dumbly as if I had snapped his mind in two with the revelation...

"Sir...?" I asked.

Dumbledore blinked and then finally some intelligence started to seep back into him as he took in the fact that I was waiting for him to say something...

"I must say, I was not expecting that..." He remarked with a little wonder in his voice.

'Why the hell did I think the man would have better advice to handle this situation.' It was like hearing Ron say tell me to be myself again.

How I wished I knew how to brew polyjuice potion... I would have been in Istanbul like that.

"Sir... how do I get rid of them... I can't walk around with wings on my back..." I asked trying to remind him that I had a situation to deal with here.

"Yes of course..." he said, finally snapping out of it.

"Tell me what you were experiencing before you grew wings..." he asked as he strode forward and started to run his wand up and down the inside of my wings and around my body.

I stood up to allow him better access.

"I was angry at Snape, as we had been fighting..."

"You should not have been fighting at all, if you and Professor Snape had a disagreement you should have tried to come to me directly." He scolded lightly as he continued to circle me with his wand.

"I did try, a entire classroom heard me tell him that he should talk to you immediately..." I said in defence.

“Very well, aside from that part of the incident what else happened?” he asked as he 'hmmmed' and 'haaed' at the various signals his wand was giving him.

I huffed testily but continued.

“I felt my core activating; you said I needed to be in the trance though to activate it...” I pointed out.

“Yes, it would appear I was wrong, the ritual magic’s had a much different effect on you that I had realized...” he said distractedly.

I huffed once more but continued.

“Anyway, I directed my anger at it, and then a blast of magic knocked Snape against the wall, and I had wings... Oh also I cracked you gargoyles when it wouldn’t let me in.” I said absentmindedly.

He looked at me in confusion...” We will revisit what you exactly did to my gargoyles later... why did you send your anger at your core...” he asked curiously.

I shrugged “Felt like it...” I replied back dumbly.

What else could I say?

“I see...” he commented. Withdrawing his wand and stepping in front of me, he appraised me and directed me to sit in a chair by his tea set.

I awkwardly tried to sit back down, but my wings were getting in the way.

I ended up leaning forward uncomfortably as I wrapped my wings around my torso once more.

Dumbledore on the other hand seated himself gracefully on a chair opposite me and started stirring a pot.

Pulling out a vial from his drawer, he poured a liberal amount into one cup and mixed it with the tea.

Sliding the very same cup over to me he grabbed his own and took a sip.

“What was that?” I asked as I took a sniff of the unknown brew.

“It is a calming draught. I believe the only way to counteract your core is for you to calm down.” He instructed as he took another sip from his cup and waited for me to take a sip myself.

I wanted to complain that I was calm but decided to just take a sip.

I was disgruntled to note that it tasted pretty good and scowled as I started to feel calmer already.

“Now Harry are you aware of your core right now...can you sense it like you did in the trance.” He asked soothingly.

I nodded even already feeling a little more relaxed than I was before.

“Good, I want you to direct your happy calm thought toward your core, like you did the first time in my office.” He instructed.

Following his instructions, I proceeded to think of every happy memory I could and directed them at my core.

Suddenly, I felt a short circuiting sensation as my magic fizzled and my upper body lightened extraordinarily. I felt like normal and took a look over my shoulders to note happily that my wings... were gone.

I couldn't help but beam as I turned to face the headmaster.

“Excellent Harry, We have something else to experiment with on our Sunday nights. For now... tell me again... what happened to professor Snape?” he asked curiously.

My happy smile started to diminish as I realized he was probably still locked unconscious in his potions lab.

I wondered how Dumbledore would take that...?

AN: Well there you go. Blood tipped feather... Is a Harry got's wings story.

I fear I may have already lost some of you as this is a little cliché, but it's an idea that's central to the plot in both symbolism and issues I want to raise. I hope that you guys will soldier through this story as you've already survived my horrible beginning.... I took the time to reread my story and I got to say I can't understand how I have any readers at all with the first few chapters.

No he is not a veela, part demon, fairy, phoenix Animagus, or angel... The wings are a subconscious manifestation of his traits and allow him to access more of his powers.

Needless to say the ritual did it...

Think of it like when anime characters suddenly transform into scantily clad super heroes in school girl uniforms. Suddenly they can leap tall buildings, fling tiara's like xena flung her shakra thing... and call upon there moon prism magic.

This is a similar transformation as it gives Harry access to powers like super strength, the ability to fly on his own (yes they actually work, they're not just decorative), and the power to access all his magic consciously.

Also I hinted to something special with his wand. His wand will have a lot to do with the second part of this series.

Credit goes to FireFromAbove for actually being the only person who didn't pm me and say I was going to make Harry a phoenix Animagus... you'd be surprised how many actually said that. Most of you probably already figured it out as I wasn't trying to be particularly sneaky in hiding it, as I wanted you all to be prepared for it for reasons I have listed already.

Anyway... I want to note something some people brought to my attention.

I switched perspectives after chapter 15 and some of you don't like it.

Chapter 15 was always meant to be written in that perspective but I realized, I liked writing it in that perspective... Although I realize now that it's not entirely fair to some readers.

Who ever would prefer me to go back to the way I wrote it before, please let me know in your review...

If I get a overwhelming response telling me they would prefer it, I will rewrite the last two chapters and this one to the original way I had it, and continue on from there... I reserve the right to write certain parts or chapters in my first person perspective but I will in general stick with the normal style.

Similarly, those of you who like my first person let me know, and if your side is overwhelming, I am going to rewrite the beginning chapters in that style.

One rewritten chapter per new chapter. That's the plan.

I've haven't updated in a while because I was already re writing some chapters into different perspectives.

Anyway, thanks for all the reviews... I hope I can continue to get even half that amount.

Quazi

Chapter 19 – The Power of Christ compels you!

Dumbledore was less than amused when he discovered Professor Snape slumped by the back wall of his own classroom.

Luckily for Harry, Dumbledore decided that Snape was at fault; but that did not mean that he did not assign some of the blame on the teen.

In the end, Dumbledore rescinded the detentions, but let the deduction of points stay as they were. Harry wanted to argue, but he reasoned he was lucky to have gotten away with as much as he had.

Dumbledore had made it sound like he would deal with Snape, in terms of punishment; but the man would keep his job in the end. It was irritating at best, as Snape had clearly crossed a line... not that he had not done so on many other occasions.

Harry knew what would happen. Snape would probably be reprimanded, then he would make a bland sardonic apology, and continue on as he had before. Waiting for the ideal opportunity to strike.

There was also the problem that he had witnessed the newly discovered wings. It was one thing to let Ron or Luna sit in on conversations with Dumbledore, but to have Snape know one of his bigger secrets. Harry wasn't fooling himself into thinking that Snape would not try and share this secret with whoever he could. The man had demonstrated beyond a shadow of a doubt that the only secrets he valued were his own.

Deciding not to dwell on what should have been. Harry refocused on his lessons with his fellow 6th years.

"Mr. Cornfoot, what did I ask the class to do?" McGonagale asked sternly from the front of the room.

The Ravenclaw with sandy brown hair looked up startled and answered uncertainly...

“Transfigure the mice into a single cat...” he stated uncomfortably.

“Then why are you putting them into Ms. Patil’s bag?” She asked archly.

Cornfoot blushed uncomfortably under the women’s stare.

Padma Patil quickly checked her bag only to squeal in fright and glare at Cornfoot spitefully. She was more studious than her twin, but both seemed to share the same revulsion for the little red eyed creatures. Parvarti stared aghast at the bag and stared hatefully at Cornfoot for doing such a thing to her sister. Apparently the two were still close despite being in separate houses.

Then again, Harry wondered whether they were just united in their revulsion for all things rodent.

Harry had long ago transfigured his mice into a cat, having found the exercise suspiciously easy.

Harry had been noticing since he had first sprouted wings, his magic seemed to flow just a little easier than it used to. Spells that normally should have taken a dozen tries at, were done in under a half that. The rest of the teachers had praised him for his feat assuming he had been studying much more diligently than usual. Hermione unfortunately was not fairing as well as he was.

She did not struggle per say, but she seemed to be having a bad day.

Thus, when Harry had consistently beat her in Charms, Care of Magical Creatures, and Transfiguration of all things, her scowl had become particularly venomous.

Harry had hoped that maybe, by some lucky chance, she might have accidentally Obliviated herself of the last 24 hours, thus having no recollection of their fight... but sadly luck was not on his side.

She refused to talk to Harry, but never stopped observing him. He wanted to scream at how frustrating his life had become.

He now had another secret... One that he himself had trouble believing was true. Dumbledore had made him promise to keep calm, as to not reveal this hush-hush ability of his.

That was particularly annoying in itself as by the mere fact that he had warned Harry to keep calm, that was what he least felt like being.

He reasoned that it would not have been a wise thing to suddenly sprout wings in the middle of transfiguration, but he almost decided to, just to show Hermione that his secrets were a lot more personal and a lot more stunning than she seemed to think they were.

However, the real problem wasn't his struggle with composure, but the inexplicable urge to 'spread his wings' and take a dive out the window.

The urge had grown significantly since he had revealed them the night before. It had been unbearable to keep them within him knowing that they were there.

They wanted to be out. He wanted them to be out...

And they itched like crazy.

... ..

Class had ended, and Harry marched sullenly toward the great hall. The last few days had passed by in a depressing and aggravating blur.

The urge had grown tremendously, and as a result of denying himself, he had become agitated and restless. Coupled with his Hermione issues, and lack of training during the weeknights, something he usually wished would end, he had fallen into a funk.

Walking in the great hall and immediately spotting four sets of eyes glaring at him; he decided he was unwelcome in the room.

Who might the four sets of eyes belong to, one might ask.

Hermione was the obvious first set. Her eyes' tracking Harry's every movement the past week.

The next set belonged to one, Professor Severus Snape. His glare was not unusual, and Harry expected some hate within the man's stare, but now they reminded him of his uncle... The man considered him an aberration, a freak, and he clearly did not approve of such a things. Harry wondered whether this was how it was like for Remus. To have judgemental eye's follow your every move, scorning you for just being different.

The next set belonged surprisingly to Ginny Weasley. She had re-emerged one day with Hermione from the girls' dormitory, both glaring angrily at Harry in united distain. Apparently the girl had convinced herself that in some shape of form, he was not supposed to have been angry at her, and the fact that he had yelled at her rudely... he was now the git. Harry had no problem returning that glare back at its sender. The girl would blush but decided to split her glare then and send it towards a familiar Ravenclaw. Harry wondered to himself how Luna had handled it.

The last set of eye's belonged to Lavender Brown. He had 'accidentally' called Trelawney a fraud once more in front of the girl. She had not taken kindly to that. He didn't mind that glare so much.

Stiffening his shoulders and firming his resolve he took a left and strolled towards the Ravenclaw table.

People barely commented anymore on his choice of seating. He received some lacklustre sneers and seated himself next to his favourite Ravenclaw.

"Hello Harry..." Luna greeted cheerily. Picking up a fork, she speared a chunk of her food.

"Fish?" She asked while holding up a flaky bit of halibut.

Harry smiled in thanks and helped himself.

Harry had been unsure lately as to how to treat Luna, He couldn't imagine himself suddenly acting obscenely romantic going over well. He suspected writing poetry, flashy gifts, and declarations of how ravishing her beauty was would only make him look like a fool and embarrass the quiet girl.

Instead there relationship had remained basically the same, although touches seemed to linger longer than before, and smiles were more meaningful.

"Who are you rooting for?" Luna asked absently as she buttered up a roll.

"Rooting for...?" He asked confused.

"Quiditch silly..." She reprimanded with a smile. Harry couldn't help but feel warm at her smile. Maybe he was a little mushy, he supposed... but he didn't care too much.

Harry suddenly realized what she had said. They were to have there first quiditch match soon. He had felt so disconnected from the sport, having no practices to attend, or even flying his broom... He didn't even know who was playing.

"Who's playing?" He asked, deciding to remedy that issue first.

She quirked an eye at him; it was less dreamy than usual, and smiled amused at him.

"Gryffindor and Ravenclaw..." she spoke airily.

'Was it really...' Harry was thrown; he had really been out of the loop if he had not noticed that.

"Technically were rivals." She pointed out sternly. "You Harry... are my enemy." She stated darkly while wielding her buttered loaf like a club.

Harry couldn't help the mischievous smile that crossed his face. "I've always wondered what it would be like to fraternize with the enemy..." he remarked teasingly.

He was pleased to see her pale cheeks tint a little red at his insinuation... it was remarkably satisfying.

Not entirely sure where his brashness was coming from, he asked...

"What are you doing tonight...?"

"Sleeping.... As usual; did you have anything planned?" she asked in a equally conspiratorial whisper. Her eyes wandered back and forth, checking for eaves droppers. Harry was less concerned.

"Well I did ask you on a date..." He couldn't help but blush at his own reminder, but pushed on none the less.

"... I figure I should make good. How do you feel about a little exploration?" he asked confidently. On the inside though he was feeling twitchy and nervous. This was a new experience for him; trying to play it sly, and suave... sadly he was neither in reality.

Luna mirrored his blush, and smiled. "Alright... meet me by the knight with the quill and sword..." she suggested.

"Midnight..." Harry asked. Feeling emboldened by her acquiescence.

"It's a date..." She said more happily. Her smile warmed Harry's heart.

Harry pouted theatrically... "No fare... that was my line..."

Luna shoved him with a smirk..." honestly... Sometimes I wonder if the nargles did get you..." she teased.

Harry didn't care that he had no idea what that meant. They were smiling, and the world suddenly seemed ten shades brighter. Sometimes, life wasn't so bad.

... ..

Harry had meandered dreamily down corridors after dinner, in a few short hours he was going to go out on a date. Considering he had only ever had one... he was fairly nervous.

Then when that thought sunk in... Harry realized now was the time to panic.

Harry stopped dead in his tracks, causing a surly 7th year Gryffindor to scowl and tell him to watch where he was going.

Harry stood outside the portrait to the Gryffindor common room, staring horrified at a fidgeting Fat lady.

"Is there something on my canvas dear?" she asked self consciously as she leaned back in her painting and squinted at the surface of her painting.

Harry paid her no mind as he continued to freak out internally.

'I have a date with Luna... tonight!' His mind hollered at him.

He had not prepared for this, it had been too spontaneous, he didn't even know what they were going to explore...

'What if I blow this... how am I going to impress her, do I give her flowers... where do I get flowers! I should shave...' Harry felt his face.

'That's right I have nothing to shave... I can't even grow stubble... What kind of guy can't grow stubble at 16?'

Harry was ignorant to the many gryffindors that stared at him oddly as they walked around him into the common room. All the while the fat lady asked whether she had anything staining her painting.

'How am I supposed to get everything ready in...' Harry turned his gaze towards his wrist and let his eyes widen in shock.

“Six Hours! That’s not enough time...” Harry quickly slid in past a second year, and ran at a sprint through the common room and up the stairs to his common room.

He ignored the whispers and students as he quickly sprinted up the stairs.

Throwing open his dorm door open, he pulled out his trunk and slammed it on his mattress...

Unlocking it impatiently he upturned it and rifled through his clothes.

Spotting his dress robes he brought them out and looked at himself in the mirror.

Comparing them to himself, he growled in irritation as he realized that they were 3 inches too short. He cursed his body for deciding that it wanted to grow now.

Tossing his dress robes to the side, he pulled out his pants and shirts...

On the other side of the room, the door reopened letting in a frowning Ron.

“Mate what’s the... hurry?” he paused as he observed Harry’s frantic nature.

Harry turned around and spotted Ron, then dismissed him, in his pursuit for decent clothing.

“I have nothing good to wear... how can I not have anything good to wear?” Harry asked in frustration.

Pulling out a familiar smelly sock that still housed a sneakoscope he reminded himself why. ‘Curse you Dursley!’

Rummaging through his things, he spotted a black shirt he had bought from the cove.

Quickly pulling it out, he beamed in triumph.

Digging deeper through his things, he pulled out a pair of slightly faded blue jeans...

They had some mud stains but that would easily come out.

Smiling in triumph he placed his selection aside and put his things away.

"Harry..."

Harry paused as he pulled out his invisibility cloak. 'I'm going to need that...'

"Harry..." Ron's voice was laced with impatience as he waited for his friend to acknowledge him.

Spotting his map, Harry pulled that out as well. "Couldn't hurt..." He mumbled.

"Harry!" Ron cried in frustration. Deciding to play rough Ron levitated Neville's pillow to smack Harry on the side of the temple.

Harry felt the pillow strike and stumbled to his left from the force.

"What was that for..." he cried indignantly. He adjusted his glasses as they hung lopsided on his face from the hit.

Ron huffed in a very Hermione like fashion and stared at Harry in exasperation.

"I've been trying to get your attention for a few minutes now... where's the fire?" he asked.

"Fire... what fire?" Harry asked in confusion.

"Isn't that how you say it... that's what Dean told me to say?" Ron asked confused.

“Maybe it was friar...?” he said absentmindedly.

Harry hardly had the patience to care as he finished tossing his things in his trunk, bundled his clothes map and invisibility cloak and made a dash out the dorm to the showers.

He walked around Ron and stopped in front of a bemused Neville.

“Hey Harry, what’s...?” Neville started.

“No time, be a pal and help Ron, he says he set fire to the friar...” Harry said absentmindedly.

Leaving a more confused Neville in his wake Harry proceeded to scrub at his skin for the next hour trying to expunge any filth he could from his body.

... ..

Harry re-entered his dorm room to find it completely empty. Wondering where his room mates were, but not really caring, Harry stepped in front of the full length mirror and proceeded to spend the next half hour trying to set his hair into some kind of order, only managing to make it look all the more wilder than before.

At the mirror’s statement that it was a lost cause, he stole a globule of gel from Seamus’ drawer, and tried to prove the piece of glass wrong.

All that resulted in was another visit to the washroom to wash out the gel, and a very smug mirror.

Putting on his jeans and shirt, he pulled his invisibility cloak on and walked down the stairs while activating his map.

Pausing, he wondered why so many gryffindors were gathered down stairs.

Ignoring the oddity, he strolled down the rest of the stairs and observed the room.

Parvarti and Lavender were playing with their divinations deck attracting a audience of 'ooing' and 'aahing' students.

"The black Jack... He's malevolent" Lavender said excitedly. A couple of first years sat in aw.

"What else can you do...?" A little boy asked entranced by Parvarti.

She preened herself proudly, while lavender looked smugly at Ron.

The red head was staring at her as if she were deranged.

"I told you there are no..."

"Please, the cards don't lie..."

Hermione who was arguing with a pair of third years about something huffed angrily at her.

"Stop encouraging them... its past curfew... they should be in bed, not listening to you show boat ridiculous superstitious rituals..." she scolded irritated.

Harry checked his watch. He had four hours left. 'I have to hurry!'

"You're just angry because you don't have the talent for divinations..." Lavender turned a mothering eye to the first years...

"Ignore the mean old Prefect... she doesn't know what she's talking about." She said soothingly.

Harry side stepped the numerous students and tried to weave his way towards the exit.

"Honestly... it's all complete tripe... There is absolutely..."

Harry weaved around a pair of 4th years who were consulting their divinations books.

"No way..."

Harry tried to avoid stepping on the numerous hands lying on the floor. He was so close...

"Hogwarts has a demon..."Hermione said with finality.

Harry immediately whipped his head at her proclamation.

'Demon?'

Not watching where he was taking his next step... havoc ensued.

Crookshanks who was enjoying a pleasant stroking from a 5th year girl, immediately sensed Harry's invisible presence. Knowing someone was trying to be sneaky but not knowing exactly where, He pounced away and wove between students.

Crookshanks sensed he was getting close, and started to hiss suspiciously.

That's when a invisible foot stomped on his tale.

At this, the cat yowled in pain and streaked away immediately into the arms of his owner. The girl shrieked in surprised at Crookshanks behaviour as he leaped at her dug his nails into her shirt.

Harry startled by the cats tail, quickly removed it and tried to pivot his step away, finding none, he quickly lost balance and bumped into a table, which conveniently enough held a stack of library books that were perched near the fire place.

The books quickly toppled over into the fire, due to the nature of the books the Fire flared outwards immediately and licked at the hands of the students who had been trying to save them.

Harry, who noticed what he had done, wandlessly summoned the books.

The students cried out in horror as the burning books shot out in all directions.

Harry realizing that that was a mistake, quickly brought all the books to a stop midair, where they sizzled ominously, hanging like the pumpkins and candles that lay suspended in the great hall.

The students shrieked and looked around the room in fear,

Harry quickly released the books and they fell on the floor. Where a set of books quickly caught the rug on fire...

"Fire!" A panicked third year cried.

Harry cursing his carelessness, called forth a wind that circled the room flinging paper, and objects away, ruffling skirts, blowing hair, and eventually blowing the fire out.

Unfortunately one of the papers blew into his face which blinded him.

Harry tried to pry the paper off his face when he toppled over a couch, pushing a student over and toppling a glass vase as he banged his knee on the side of the table and banged his head on the stone floor.

Harry moaned loudly as he righted himself.

Quickly realizing he was choking a student with his legs as it was covering his neck as he tried to stand, he quickly got out, and decided he had helped enough.

The students looked on in fear as the fire blew itself out from the wind, a student was pushed over and made gasping noises, and a disturbingly pained moan emanated around the room.

Then absolute silence, until a quick shuffling noise and the portrait hole opened and closed with a bang. An invisible force slammed the portrait open making every one jump as the chaos finally settled...

Everyone stared around the room in fear and then accusation as they stared at a wide eyed prefect.

"See what you did, you got him angry!" Parvarti scolded.

“But...” Hermione tried...

“Quiet... Don’t anger it further Hermione... do you want to bring the castle down around us.” Lavender hushed frantically.

All the while a invisible figure moaned its way down the corridors as it made its way toward the greenhouses.

‘The things I do for her...’ he thought exasperatedly.

... ..

Making his way down past a set of stairs Peeves was currently applying blood red paint to; he pushed open the entryway doors and made his way towards the greenhouses.

Heading to greenhouse one, which held the more whimsical and safe plants, Harry jimmied open the window and climbed in.

Wandering the aisles, he inspected the bushes full of flowers and other oddities unique to the magical world.

Hearing an eerie music, he followed the sound towards a particular bush.

The bush in question had a flower he had only observed during the day.

Professor Sprout had called it the siren blooms. They were supposedly flowers that vibrated at different levels of light. When night fell, they played an unearthly melody that sounded like a woman’s humming.

Harry found it entrancing and decided this was the flower to give.

Conjuring up a white cloth, he stuck his hand into the bush and snapped the blooms away from its branch.

Wrapping the white cloth around the stem and tying it in a bow; he thought it would make a lovely gift.

There was only one problem....

“Silencio...” he cast.

The Orchid like flower only seemed to get louder under the silencing charm. Huffing in exasperation, Harry pulled the bloom under his cloak and decided to risk it.

Walking out the greenhouse, he checked his watch... three hours forty five minutes to go...

Harry thought that he just might make it.

... ..

“Harry mate, you wouldn’t believe what just happened down stairs...” Ron cried in excitement.

“Harry...?” Ron asked in confusion.

Harry’s bed curtains were drawn around his bed.

Another student quickly ran into the room...

“Ron come on, McGregor found some spirit tracking charms and were going to... Dean said excitedly.

“Shh... Harry’s asleep.” Ron warned. His best friend had been acting weird lately; maybe a good night sleep would do him some good.

Dean paused and nodded. Waving his room mate out the room, he urged Ron to hurry.

Dean Thomas paused though. Contemplating something he went to his bed and pulled out something his grandmother had given him before school had started.

His grandmother was an old Nun from who always warned him about witchcraft and Satanism.

His family had decided not to inform her about his school, but that did not stop her from stopping by the train station to hand him a package.

Her old rosaries and a bottle of Holly water.

Feeling excited and wary after seeing the spirits violent behaviour in the common room, Dean Thomas pulled the objects out and ran to catch up with the excited students below.

He couldn't be too prepared.

... ..

Harry had wandered over to owlry and plunked down to look over his map.

He reviewed the secret corridors and rooms. He was trying to find the most interesting rooms in the castle to entertain his date with.

Hedwig swooped down and landed on his invisible knee waiting knowing that he was there.

Harry smiled and pulled a hand out of his invisibility cloak and scratched the bird in the places he knew she liked.

"Don't worry girl, you're the only one for me..." he joked.

The owl crooned happily and leaned into his touch.

Suddenly out of no where another owl swooped down, and flew directly under the exposed invisibility cloak.

Harry startled jumped up and tried to swat the owl away.

All he managed to do was tangle himself and the owl under the cloak and irritate Hedwig who quickly flapped her wings to keep from falling off.

“Bloody Owl... Get off” Harry cried angrily.

HOO

“Not you Hedwig!” Harry cried exasperated. Hedwig ruffled her feathers testily.

Finally pulling his invisibility cloak off, he freed himself and the owl from its confines.

The barn owl clawed at his shirt and pecked at his arms as he fought it off.

Hedwig, seeing her master being attacked quickly swooped in and started to battle the other owl.

The barn owl being fought from two sides decided to cut its losses and run.

Harry watched as finally the owl flew off him... but not before swooping down and stealing his gift for Luna.

“Hey... get back here” Harry cried as he gave chase to the owl. Hedwig seeing the owl steal from her master quickly pursued.

Both owls flapped around the room noisily exciting the few owl’s that remained in the room, those who had already hunted and brought back there evening pray... and then swooped out the large window and rounded the towers...

“Thief!” Harry cried angrily.

He couldn’t believe an owl had just robbed him. Why was everyone against him tonight?

... ..

“You know we should probably head back...”

“What why!” Seamus asked in outrage.

Hermione stared at Seamus as if he were insane. “You’re sneaking around trying to find a demon after curfew... do you not see any kind of reason at all?” She asked gruffly.

“We’re...” Lavender said succinctly.

“Excuse me” Hermione asked back.

“You said you’re, implying just us. You’re here too if you’ve forgotten. That means we all are searching for demons after curfew...” Lavender said smugly.

“The fat lady wasn’t in her portrait...” She defended herself.

She mumbled for a moment about history repeating itself, which earned a chuckle from Ron and a smile from Neville.

“Either way, the moment you stepped out the portrait hole, you joined our little party...” Parvarti said supporting her other dorm mate.

“I was trying to stop you... What if a teacher comes, or filch!” she protested loudly.

“Then you’re going to get in just as much trouble as we will... so I suggest you shut up, unless you want to get caught.” Lavender hissed

Hermione Huffed and stared scornfully at the pair but followed grudgingly while rolling her eyes as Seamus waved his wand about.

He was performing a badly mangled version of a diagnostic spell. Hermione wanted to correct him but saw no use as all it would detect were living objects around them.

“Do you guys hear something?” Ron asked in confusion.

“What...?” Neville asked.

Then suddenly a faint eerie humming noise started to echo around them.

It was haunting and almost sounded like a women's wails of terror.

"What is that...?" Dean asked in confusion as he grasped his rosary a little tighter under his robes.

"It's probably Moaning Myrtle..." Hermione said dismissively.

"Oh that's right, Blame lonely sad little Myrtle for making a racket..." A ghostly voice said testily as she stuck her head out of a door.

"Bah!" Ron cried at her sudden appearance.

Neville fumbled backwards into Hermione who looked startled at her entrance.

The noise continued to get louder.

"That's not you?" She asked confused.

"Yes blame the dead girl... that's real nice... as if I don't already have my own problems without having you accuse me of things..." Myrtle moaned sardonically while she floated out of the wall and crossed her arms to stare resentfully at the girl.

The noise was getting closer.

"It's the demon... it's captured a soul and it's coming for us..." Seamus said wide eyed.

"Demon..." Myrtle asked in confusion with a hint of fear laced between her normally screechy tones.

Parvarti whirled around...." You have to hide... It already got the Friar, Neville said that Harry said that the demon set him on fire!" she said quickly...

"But he's a ghost..." Myrtle said in confusion.

“Exactly... Run!” Lavender warned as she pulled out her wand.

Suddenly a window burst open and a black streak that screeched that horrendous wale’s zoomed by everyone's heads.

Myrtle screamed in fright and dove into the ceiling while the rest of the group dove out of the way.

Dean doing the only thing he could think of; stuck his rosary out and closed his eye’s praying for a miracle.

Suddenly a white streak flew in and the group watched the blur give chase seemingly called forth by Dean’s beads.

The group looked down at the only thing left behind.

A snow white feather.

“God sent us an angel...” Dean said in wonder.

Hermione was too dumbfounded to comment.

... ..

Harry having exited the owlry, not willing to risk having another owl steal something of his, wandered the corridors while looking at his map.

He followed his a corridor down towards the second floor corridor.

Suddenly He heard a familiar noise... It was the sirens bloom. The black barn owl streaked past his head and Hedwig gave chase.

Harry wondered how the Owls had gotten into the castle but didn’t care so much as long as Hedwig exacted revenge on his behalf.

Although he cringed at the noise the flower was making, apparently when it was sped away at such high speeds, its hum started to turn into wails that sounded as if a women was being tortured mercilessly.

Hoping not too many people would notice; Harry proceeded to examine the wall before him.

The map indicated another room hidden behind; he had never visited so he had no idea what it could be.

Following the instruction the him on the map told him to follow, Harry traced a cross along the wall in a cross like fashion.

Suddenly a pair of wooden doors appeared where stone used to be.

Side windows also appeared made of stained glass depicting Doves in a battle with fiery creatures wielding pitchforks.

The entire scene was very intricate and deciding to enter and see what the room hid, he pushed the doors wide open.

Harry gaped at the sight before him.

It was a testament to the expansion charm that it could create a room with such large dimensions.

Harry looked around him invisible as he found himself standing in a giant Cathedral.

It was almost gothic with its pillars and archways, and the dark shadows made it seem ominous...Objects littered the room, benches and pews lay smashed along the floor, and basins shattered. There were ominously jagged claw marks along the stone walls. Whatever had happened here had left the room in moderately better condition than the shrieking shack.

In the centre of the room was a dais raised two or three steps with shackles and chains attached too it.

The entire platform was scratched like claw marks had weathered the stone more than nature ever could have.

One of the chains was ominously shattered into pieces.

‘This would have been a perfect place to bring Luna to explore...’

Suddenly Harry heard numerous footsteps and whirled around on the spot. Consulting his map, he spotted surprisingly his year mates from Gryffindor.

All about the castle there were names of gryffindors wandering the corridors in packs.

Some he recognized as younger or older years... Some of them had recruited members from other houses and there were seven separate groups wandering the school.

‘What’s going on...?’ Harry wondered curiously.

Deciding to step outside Harry vacated the area lest they find him.

Even though he was under his invisibility cloak he didn’t want to risk bumping into them.

Stepping outside and giving himself a head start, he sprinted away from the room.

... ..

“Come on let’s go after it.” Seamus said enthusiastically.

Soon enough the group of sixth years were giving chase to the perceived spirits. Everyone ignored Hermione’s complaints about the foolishness of such an act...

Dean lead the way, with his rosary wrapped around his wrist and wand, emboldened by the miracle he had witnessed.

The white feather held in his other hand, something he planned to present to his grandmother during the Christmas holidays.

Lavender brown ran close to the teen seemingly impressed with his bold take charge attitude.

Dean wouldn't say no to that.

Running around a corner, the teens were brought to a halt by the sight before them.

There in front of them was a wooden door way that should not have been there in the first place.

"Where did that room come from...? It's never been there before..." Neville asked nervously.

Ron holding his wand high and shining a Lumos peaked in and gasped.

"Bloody Hell" He cried.

"Language Ronald!" Hermione reprimanded, while walking forward with her own wand and taking a peak.

She stared wide eyed at the room.

The other gryffindors followed suit and were astounded.

Taking a few steps in they held their wands high and explored the eerie crevices and nooks the room held.

"What do you think caused this...?" Seamus asked jokingly while pointing at a set of claw marks on the wall.

"Probably the same thing that did this..." Ron said while pointing at the well scratched stone dais.

Parvarti stepped forward and handled a the shattered remains of the shackles.

"My inner eye tells me this is where the demon broke free from..." She said mystically while scrunching her face in concentration.

Hermione huffed agitated.

"It's not a demon... It's probably a Bogart or something, and we don't know what could have been in this room. It could have been a place where they housed where wolves during their transformation for all we know..." Hermione exclaimed in frustration.

Lavender just looked at Hermione sadly.

"It's okay to admit that you were wrong Hermione... It's all part of learning." She said knowledgably. Hermione growled in frustration and headed for the exit.

"Whatever... I'm going back to the common room, Have fun hunting your demon..." she remarked in parting.

... ..

Harry checked his watch... he still had about forth five minutes left... He felt a little dirty and headed to the prefects bath room to wash splash some water in his face.

Finding the entrance he said the password and waltzed in, going to the sink, he ran the taps...

Suddenly all the taps started to spew forth liquid... from the scented ones to the scorching hot ones.

Harry cursed Moaning Myrtle, recognizing this as her handiwork. She was almost as bad as Peeves, except she seemed to focus her outbursts on the Hogwarts plumbing.

Harry tried to turn the taps off, but all that caused was more water to spew forth.

Soon the sinks were overflowing.

The pool taps started to turn on as well... The water level started to rise... Harry started to panic. Shooting the only spell he could think of, he froze the surface of the pool.

That was a bad idea.

The charm followed the liquid from the surface of the pool, towards the pipes...

Suddenly there was a groaning noise and the pipe heads burst away.

Needless to say, Harry decided he was in over his head.

He could have stayed put and tried to resolve the problem he had caused, but then again, he didn't want to be blamed for this.

Deciding somewhere in the recess of his mind that it was truly all Myrtle's fault, he high-tailed it out of the room and narrowly avoided running into Hermione.

... ..

Hermione was very angry. All she wanted was to send everyone to bed, but then somehow she got dragged into some wild demon chase. Her house would more than likely lose all their points in a move that would be marked in Hogwarts a history as the single greatest amount of points lost in one day, and she would probably be scolded for not keeping the students inline.

Suddenly... Hermione heard a odd groaning noise.

She stepped forward and followed the noise with her wand held at her side.

"Hello, is anyone there?" She called out weakly, praying it was a student she could scold, and not a teacher to scold her.

The groaning was coming from a door.... The door to the prefect's bath.

'Honestly... Prefects aren't supposed to be out this late, they know that...' she thought angrily.

She was about to walk over and knock on the door when suddenly it flew open and a transparent inhuman form that was taller than her but without any limbs or head shot out.

The light from her wand hit the being and her light reflected off specks of water that hung on its form accentuating its eerie build. It immediately shot right at her, and she couldn't help but scream in fright narrowly avoiding being attacked by it.

Hermione watched terrified as it sped away vanishing completely before her eyes.

Hermione wide eyed looked down at the floor where she saw puddles of water streaming around her feet.

Taking a tentative step forward she stepped inside.

Her gasp could be heard by the McGonagall two corridors away, as she took in the destruction.

When McGonagall finally joined her she gasped as well as she took in the destruction.

Water faucets unleashed torrents of water, the air mingled with the steam from the hot taps and the perfume from the cold taps making the room insufferably hard to breathe in, there were puddles forming everywhere, too much for the small drains to handle.

McGonagall didn't even consider blaming a student for this kind of destruction; it was clear that only a person with a truly violent streak could perform something so destructive... It was time alert the headmaster.

... ..

Harry Gasped in breath. He had almost run into Hermione; she had spotted the dripping water off his cloak, knowing someone was there.

He hoped she wouldn't report him... although he supposed he wouldn't hold it against her. Considering all the damage he had caused.

'What am I, channelling Tonks?!' He criticized.

Looking at his watch and noting he still had 20 minutes left he decided to screw it and just go early.

Walking purposefully while spending time conjuring some simple tulips, he found his way towards the knight indicated.

Checking his map, he quickly found himself opposite the Ravenclaw common room. On the other side of the wall he stood in front of, was a dot that was circling the room inside.

He also spotted the numerous teachers and students wandering the halls. 'Why was everyone out tonight was something happening?'

Deciding to ignore the curious question, Harry straightened his robes and knocked confidently on the stone wall.

"Luna..." he called in a whisper.

The Dot on the map suddenly stopped and moved quickly towards the wall separating it from the dot labelled Harry Potter.

"Luna...?" He asked again.

Suddenly the wall retracted to reveal an excited Ravenclaw...

"Harry, you'll never guess what has happened..." She cried out in excitement.

Harry smiled happily, then realizing by the curious stair the girl was sending the hallway, he was still under the invisibility cloak; he pulled the cloak away and presented her with her flowers.

Luna smiled happily while taking the flowers.

“Thank you Harry...” she said while smelling them tentatively.

Harry was pleased, so far things were going alright.

“Shall we...” He asked. The girl smiled prettily and hooked her arm with his.

“We shall...” She confirmed.

Just as Harry was about to say something, suddenly the hallway lit up, Wall sconces set ablaze and a ringing noise activated around the castle.

“Students...” A familiar Grandfatherly Voice Echoed.

“Please forgive the Late interruption but all students are required to make their way to the Great Hall immediately...” Dumbledore repeated the Announcement once more, and let the alarm continue to sound...

“It must be because of the demon...” Luna Said excitedly.

“Demon?” He asked. This was the second time he had heard someone refer to a demon tonight.

Luna Looked at him aghast... don’t you know, A demon supposedly got in attacked Gryffindor tower, and has been terrorizing the school all night.

Suddenly a wailing sound echoed around the corridors only to die out immediately.

“That it...” She cried in excitement, tugging Harry forward. Harry already recognized the noise, it was that accursed flower. By now with all the lights on, it should have shut up.

Suddenly little pieces and events started to snap together with in his mind.

“What did the Demon do exactly in the Gryffindor common room?” Harry asked, already knowing the truth.

“It attacked everyone with fire and tried to choke a student to death, apparently it set the fat friar on Fire!” Luna exclaimed.

Harry moaned to himself...How did his life become so complicated.

The two were swept up in the wave of students filtering in from the common rooms still clad in their pyjamas if they had not already exited to go on a demon Hunt.

Apparently Luna had waited for him, wanting to go on the hunt together.

Harry had sat by his date listening to the tales of students who whispered about the pained moans or the miraculous intervention dean Thomas had called forth.

Apparently one student had felt blood drip under the stair way that Harry had spotted Peeves Paint... The stories started to become more ludicrous and strange until finally Dumbledore Appeared.

He explained that there were a number of ‘incidents’ that had occurred throughout the castle that he and the staff would investigate, but felt it prudent to bring the school together to err on the safe side.

Instead of providing sleeping bags, after noting the excited students and wide awake prefects, Dumbledore had called forth late night snacks and other amusements to keep the students entertained.

All in all it was a fun night, Luna enjoyed it all the more when Harry admitted the hand he suspected he played in the events that had occurred.

Luna’s Laughter could be heard throughout the hall as Harry desperately tried to shush her.

It was a night neither would ever forget...

AN: I'm trying to get back into the swing of writing in this perspective, which I personally find a bit challenging, so forgive me for any Grammar issues or jumps into first person perspectives that I might have missed.

This chapter was hard to write as it is mostly filler, I only really wanted to talk about the wings but decided Harry had seen the headmaster too much as of late and wanted to hold that off until the next chapter.

Anyway, because of that, the date was moved up one chapter.

I was going for a Rorschablott style madcap feel with all these events suddenly spinning out of control, all because Ron decided to say a phrase he had picked up from dean.

Harry just wasn't paying attention, he knows the phrase means in general.

A recap...

Run asks where the fire is, then mentions the friar.

Harry isn't paying attention tells Neville Ron set the friar on fire...
Neville questions Ron, roommates overhear, News spread to common room where Parvarti and lavender capitalize on the situation to show off their divinations, and the rest... well you can figure out.

The Cathedral, Hermione was partially right. It was used in actuality as a indoor care of magical creature's class 300 years earlier, until a hippogriff broke free and reeked havoc.

It could have been used by werewolves but it wasn't.

I was going to turn it into a church, but I figured to leave religion alone, as I had already done that issue to death in this chapter with the rosaries and demon jokes and everything else.

I would like to point out it was all much more funnier to watch in my head that I suspect it was for you to read... hopefully I can remedy that later on with rewrites.

Anyway, next chapter, wings, and Hermione... chapter after, schools out, chapter after that... the chapter I've wanted to write from the very beginning... that chapter will be done well or it wont be posted.

Till next time.

Quazi

Chapter 20 – I refuse to quote R. Kelley

“Hey wait up...”

Turning around Harry spotted the familiar freckled face of his red headed compadre.

Harry stopped his mindless wanderings as he waited for his dorm mate to catch up with him.

“Hey Ron, what’s going on...” Harry asked lazily.

He was a little sleepy considering he spent the entire night in the great hall listening to the yammerings of the student body. In the end the professors had chalked the ‘incidents’ to a cackling Peeves who took great pleasure in egging on all those who believed the school demonically possessed.

In the end, Harry and Luna had spent the rest of the night listening to the excitement and laughing to themselves about the true events of the night before.

One of the side effects of having an entire night confined with ones date with the student body was...

“So you and Luna...” Ron said with a smirk. He nudged Harry’s side suggestively while trying to waggle his eyebrows.

Harry shoved his friend lightly but couldn’t help the proud smile. Maybe it was the fact that he was starting to hate keeping secrets, or maybe he just wanted to revel in the fact that the girl he liked, liked him back; but he gladly showed his affection to Luna in front of the masses.

Within minutes, the whispers that spread word about the demonic uprising were also relaying information on the confirmation that Harry Potter and Loony Lovegood were dating.

Harry had been receiving ribbings and good natured teasing from many of his friends all morning. His dorm mates in particular were ecstatic in their kidding.

Harry wondered if they had been waiting for this day to come... the amount of innuendo and lurid punch lines lead Harry to believe they had been practicing and preparing long before he considered romantic interests with anyone.

"Me and Luna..." Harry replied back in confirmation.

"I gotta say, I was getting worried there..." Ron remarked in a candid confessional moment.

"About?" Harry asked.

"I thought you had a thing for Ginny a while back... I don't know what I would have done then..." Ron admitted with a shudder. Harry hid his own shudder and frown at the thought. As things were, there was definitely no chance that would happen.

"Not that you're a bad bloke or anything, but you know... sister and all." Ron explained.

"Don't worry; the Weasley's are safe from my advances... I know for a fact that most of them snore like Hagrid." Harry confided with a smirk.

"Oy, I do not snore..." Ron defended.

"Of course you don't, and I'm really Snape's long lost son..."

Both stopped and stared at each other in abject horror... shuddering at the thought in unison. That was a twisted deprived idea, and neither wanted to imagine the possibilities.

Harry and Ron rounded the last corner to the great hall. Harry stopped and smiled at the person he saw outside the intricately carved doors.

Ron spared him an amused glance before patting him on the shoulder and walking ahead.

“Morning Luna... Sit with us today, okay?” Ron invited.

Luna stared at the red head with a smile and nodded her head as he entered leaving the two alone in the hallway.

Harry smiled brightly and walked forward closing the distance between the two. His arms fidgeted at his sides as he wondered whether he should hug her or something in greeting.

“Good morning Luna.” He said with an awkward smile. He wasn’t sure how to behave right now. The night before had been great, and things had gone smoothly as they spent their time together... but the short few hours they had separated seemed like an eternity. Harry wasn’t sure anymore what he would do or say to the girl. He still liked her, and he wanted to go on another date... but was he supposed to suddenly know how to behave around her. Was he supposed to have greeted her with a sultry kiss, or a warm hug... maybe a business like handshake, ala Percy. Was he supposed to tell her how beautiful she looked, or how he missed her even though they had only just seen each other two and a half hours earlier...

...he kinda missed her, but not really. He wasn't that mushy after all.

Suddenly the next few moments seemed like they would define their relationship... it would be the keystone upon which every other greeting would be built upon. Harry wondered for a moment if he was being too neurotic... That thought was never answered as Luna Lovegood stared at him curiously for a moment before taking three steps back.

Squaring her shoulders, she charged.

Harry, wide eyed; put his arms forward to catch the girl but she continued her tackle like run and landed her left shoulder in Harry's chest.

Harry 'oomfed' but caught the girl in an awkward half hug spin that lessened the force of her attack.

Looking down, Harry stared at the innocent eyes of the girl in front of him.

“What was that for?” He asked in confusion.

The girl still wrapped in his arms looked up and stared at him as if it was obvious.

“You were thinking too hard, from now on give me a hug and tell me I look pretty. That’s all you have to do.” She commanded.

“But why did you tackle me?” Harry asked curiously.

“Your hugging me aren’t you?” she asked rhetorically.

“What if I had just stepped aside...” Harry asked curiously

“I refer you to my previous statement.” Luna said in a dreamily smug voice.

Harry couldn’t help but smile at the odd behaviour. She certainly had a way of easing tensions.

“I’m waiting.” Luna sing songed. Her dreamy eyes were amusedly fixed upon the Gryffindor in reprimand.

“... oh right. You look pretty.”

Hug

The girl hugged back.

“You look pretty as well. Now come on, I’m hungry.” She ordered with a smile, dragging Harry into the hall by his right hand.

“Hey, I’m hansom, not pretty.” Harry argued.

“Sure you are...” Luna teased with an innocent smile as she pulled him along to the Gryffindor table.

Harry grinned to himself as he caught up with the girl and nudged her with his shoulder.

“You do look pretty though.” He said with a smile. The girl tinted a little red but Harry could tell she was pleased.

“Oh Lord, he’s turning mushy...” Ron moaned as he caught wind of Harry’s remark. Dean shook his head sadly on the other side, as if Harry had succumbed to some tragic affliction.

... ..

Breakfast was enjoyable, Lavender and Parvarti were actually genuinely interested in Luna, even though she didn’t talk as much about gossip and makeup as the two, they seemed to hit it off well enough. Most of his friends, when not teasing Harry mercilessly, were quite welcoming to the Ravenclaw; something Harry appreciated greatly.

Ginny and Hermione on the other hand; Hermione acted her normal self around Luna, she wasn’t overly rude, but she wasn’t overly friendly either. She congratulated them on their relationship before pointedly ignoring Harry. Ginny on the other hand had vanished. She was one of the first to leave the great hall in the morning when the teachers had given the all clear and Harry had seen hide nor hair of the girl since then. Harry had noted privately to himself that she was less than pleased with the closeness he and Luna shared the night before, and when the gossip started to spread that the two were a couple... Harry was uncomfortable with the way the girl acted after that.

Malfoy had tried to dampen their day with some derogatory remarks, but thanks to the quick intervention of a watching McGonagall, the boy quickly decided to try his turn a little later.

The two had to unfortunately part ways as school work had demanded their time. Harry his Independent studies, and Luna her

normal studies. Luna who needed to do some Herbology work quickly headed to the green houses, while Harry the room of requirement.

Harry opened the door to the room of requirement and found himself in his standard working environment. He noted that the feathers were no where to be seen as well.

They had become a constant when ever he entered the room, and he had to always ask the room to be rid of them for him. He started to come up with convoluted explanations that explained the room's behaviour... but when he started to go in circles he stopped before he would confound himself with out a wand.

He started to set up his supplies for potions deciding to get that out of the way first. He was about to start the pot to boil when the door to the room suddenly opened.

Looking up he moaned internally as he spotted his brunette friend.

"Hermione?" Harry asked. 'What's she doing here?'

"Harry..." She said in greeting before walking towards a newly created table halfway in between the exit and him.

She plonked down and started to remove books from her satchel.

When it became clear that she wasn't going to say anything, Harry decided to ask.

"Is there something I can help you with?" Harry asked.

"No..." Hermione answered briskly. Pulling out a quill and her book, while scribbling something on her scroll, she proceeded to read and write.

Deciding that since subtlety wasn't working; he went for the more direct approach.

"What are you doing?" he asked.

Hermione huffed, "Trying to study... what does it look like." She answered without looking up.

"I realize that, but why are you doing it here..." Harry asked.

"You don't own the Room Harry, I can study wherever I want to." Hermione pointedly answered.

Harry's face reddened at the insinuation. No one was fooled. This was one of her little spying moves.

"I don't, but I was here first, I come here to study 'Alone', Can't you study in the library like you usually do?" Harry asked as politely as possible.

"I prefer to study here..." Hermione answered while flipping a page in her book.

Harry tried his hardest not to growl in frustration.

Noticing his pot was boiling already he decided to just get started. He'd play it by ear...

Flipping to the set of instruction on the outline he was given, Harry read the description. A headache relief potion. 'I'll probably need this very soon.'

The potion was tricky; he had to add in ingredients within minutes of each other. And many of them were required to be prepared freshly before being added. He would have to work quickly and carefully.

Reading through the instructions, he started to set up his ingredients. He diced the ones that could be prepared before hand, and organized everything the way he thought best. Pulling out his wand, He charmed a set of knives to dice for him, using Flitwick's animation charm. They were already going through the motions of dicing even though there was nothing to cut yet.

After he was sufficiently set up, he started the potion.

Tossing in the asphodel and quickly imbuing some magic into the boomslang, he started to cut the treebor cubes into eights.

“What are you making...” A voice asked. Harry, startled; miss-diced a cube.

Cursing himself for being distracted, Harry quickly grabbed another cube and started to dice it correctly while setting the ruined treebor aside to be salvaged later.

Just finishing in the nick of time, he tossed the cubes in quickly and started to pluck leaves off a knurled little plant he had to borrow from Madame Sprout.

“Harry...”

“I’m making a headache potion...” Harry answered agitatedly.

Looking up Hermione had abandoned her quill and stared at Harry in confusion.

“Were not doing a headache potion until Tuesday... You should do Monday’s lesson first you know.” Hermione reprimanded.

Harry having tossed his leaves in started to gather the seeds and infuse them in packets of six with magic.

“I did do Monday’s lesson, yesterday... if you don’t mind, I need to concentrate.” Harry said in dismissal.

Hermione didn’t say anything until he started to slice his salamander livers.

“You shouldn’t use so much liver, the potion will become too thick.

“The instructions say you have to use this much... they make the potion ready for the parsley.” Harry said distractedly.

“That can’t be right; parsley doesn’t have any healing properties... let me see those notes.” Hermione argued.

Harry tossed in his liver and let himself relax as he reached a resting stage in his brewing.

Turning an irritated eye towards Hermione who was reaching for his outline, Harry slammed his hand down on top of them. Hermione's hand flinched away from the notes.

"Hermione, will you stop. I know what I'm doing; all you're doing is distracting me." Harry reprimanded tersely.

Hermione looked on affronted. "You have to be willing to accept help Harry, you can't do everything by yourself."

"You can if you're brewing potions that require you to... Now please, will you just let me be, I have to finish this." Harry pleaded.

Hermione huffed and mumbled something about stubborn pig headed something or others and walked back to her table.

Harry noting the color of the potion restarted his brewing.

Every now and then, he noticed that Hermione was observing his work with critical eyes. She shook her head every now and then as if Harry had made some terrible mistake. It was starting to get very aggravating.

Harry started his clockwise half turns of the ladle when Hermione shook her head once more and tutted to herself.

"What..." Harry asked gruffly.

"Your letting too much vapour escape, the potion will loose its potency if you do." She warned.

"The potion is too strong to be swallowed right now; I need to loose some potency..." Harry defended.

Hermione tutted once more but didn't say anything else.

Aggravated, Harry snapped.

'I need to be able to work without interference...' Harry pleadingly asked the room.

Suddenly a solid brick wall started to build itself in-between the two. The last Harry saw of her, was of her scandalized face before he was finally away from the prying eyes.

The rest of the potion went smoothly and Harry was pleased to note that the brew turned out as bright a blue as the notes indicated they should be.

Luckily he brewed many doses, so he stored them away in little vials for later use. He thought he just might need them if today was to be any indicator.

Deciding to leave, he had the room disband the brick wall and came face to face with a ticked off Gryffindor.

"That was very rude Harry." Hermione scolded.

"And you weren't being rude yourself, constantly interrupting me and watching over my shoulders... this is why I study alone." Harry accused as he strode past the girl.

It was lunch time and he felt like a sandwich... or a sedative; preferably for the girl behind him.

"I was just trying to help... I thought you would have appreciated some help considering how much you hate potions." Hermione remarked huffily.

"I don't hate it now when I'm studying on my own; I do alright without people interrupting my work." Harry argued pointedly. He exited the room and started his trek towards the great hall.

"Well how was I supposed to know that?! You don't tell me anything." Hermione accused. She jogged to keep pace with the ebony haired boy.

"You could ask politely, it's not that hard to do... you don't need to try and spy on me to get information. Believe it or not, I don't spend half an hour a day thinking up things to keep from you." Harry argued.

Not waiting for an answer he pulled open the great hall doors and spotted a much friendlier face. Chatting amicably with Seamus and Ron, Luna was waving her hands about animatedly while the other two just as passionately waved theirs.

Seamus seemed to be getting the brunt of their joint dialogues. Walking forward Harry finally caught wind of the discussion.

"It's the wrackspurtles... it's the only logical explanation. They have their practices right next to a meadow of wheat, its obvious they've been influenced by them." Luna argued. The sandwich she was holding in her hand flip flopped as she waved it about wildly.

"See, Wrackspurtles...." Ron agreed whole heartedly.

"Oh that's Bullocks! They just suck, nothing else too it." Seamus explained vehemently.

"The Cannons don't suck. They just have to get de-wrackspurtles...ed?" Ron finished unsurely. His eyes crossed for a second as he tried to make sense of the word he had just uttered. Somewhere, an English teach was weeping as Luna nodded in agreement.

"You support the cannons?" Harry asked while sitting beside the unusually animated girl.

Turning around quickly, just spotting Harry; Luna smiled happily.

"Oh hello Harry..."

"You picked yourself a winner mate...." Ron said approvingly while giving Seamus a dirty look. One the teen ignored mockingly.

"So it's true then..." Harry asked in mock horror.

Luna harrumphed to herself. "And If I do...?" She challenged.

Harry waited a few moments before shaking his head lightly.

"You're lucky your cute." He teased as he took a sip from his pumpkin juice.

She lightly punched him in the arm but the amused stern look told him all he needed to know.

... ..

The rest of the day had passed relatively quickly. The D.A. was more prepared for Harry's ambush... but were still quickly taken down within a few minutes. They mainly decided to practice from the spells list 'Sir' had given them.

Something Harry had no trouble teaching as he had mastered the entire list already. Something Hermione took suspicious note of.

The day after Snapes short lived stint into defence, Professor Sinestra had entered the room and had them stuck reviewing their theory. It left the class uncomfortably reminded of the year before. Luckily Professor Sinestra allowed them to practice certain spells until her replacement could arrive.

Harry had hoped that Professor Dumbledore would have taken over for the time being, but apparently he was unavailable for the week. All they were told was their new teacher would make an appearance the following Monday, and remain til the Easter break.

Harry went to bed remembering the last 48 hours... All in all, it had been a good weekend.

... ..

Harry had spent most of the weekend anxiously awaiting this moment. Whether he realized it or not.

The hours had seemed to creep by at an agonizingly slow pace. Every owl, or opened window seemed to only intensify his need for time to go by faster.

Pacing back and forth, he circled the headmaster's office. Dumbledore had had a note delivered to his bedside, informing him to be in his office at 6:00 PM.

It was now 6:02 PM and Harry was getting anxious. That inexplicable urge to release his wings and to take a suicidal dive out a window had grown ten fold. He tried his hardest to not stare at the windows as that only teased his craving. He had already tried to while away the moments preparing for the transformation, Transfiguring his shirt under his robe to have a hole big enough to release his wings without destroying his clothing, going through calming exercises, going through the memories of his last experience.... After those tantalizing ten minutes were up, Harry went back to pacing the room trying his hardest not to call forth the wings then and there.

Suddenly a soft creaking noise emanated from behind him.

Harry spun around and watched as the headmaster's office door opened to reveal the man he had been waiting for what seemed like an eternity.

"Hello my boy, Sorry to keep you waiting." Dumbledore apologized brightly.

"Hello Professor..." Harry said a little anxiously.

Dumbledore took a look at Harry for a moment, noting the fingers that drummed at his sides and the twitchy behaviour.

"Are you alright....?" Dumbledore asked in concern.

"I'm fine... I've just wanted to, you know..." he finished off lamely as he made an odd gesture of flapping with his hands.

“Ah, of course... well then, I shall not keep you waiting.” He said in understanding. Pulling out another set of brass knuckles from his robes, he held it out for Harry to take.

Harry did so with out preamble and found himself being pulled to his destination in a flash of naval pulling chaos.

Using the insights his training had given him and his understanding of his sensitivity to magic, he took a hold of the pulling force and kept himself steady as he was deposited in a large chamber.

He wobbled a bit as his feet made contact, but otherwise he remained standing. Something he planned to revel in at a later date; the urge to bring forth his feathered appendages grew even more as he realized how close he was to finally letting himself be free of his self constraints.

His body was already pumping adrenaline into his system in anticipation in accordance with his excitement.

“Harry before you summon your wings... let me first run a base line scan...” Dumbledore asked unaware how much effort it took to keep from letting them out as he spoke.

Harry grudgingly complied as he waited for the man to get it over with.

In the mean time Harry looked around the room. They were undoubtedly in the citadel, but the room was one of the largest he had ever been in. Like a seven story gym, as long as the largest swimming pool, and just as wide. Three walls which Harry saw layered beneath the surface emitted tiny lights that danced about. Runes littered the area giving off an unreal light that only he was privileged to see.

The last wall was the exterior glass panneling that he recognized as the standard for the building. Outside was a slightly lower view of the eastern horizon. They were probably somewhere around the 23 floor if the view was anything to go by.

The floor was a glossy burgundy. Not quite as slick as tile, but more so than the linoleum floors of his old school.

Harry having enough of taking in the sights stared at his headmaster impatiently.

Dumbledore took another half a minute waving his wand about in what Harry believed to be stalling tactics, until finally he lowered his wand and turned to say something to the teen.

Harry didn't even bother to wait as he immediately entered the correct state of mind, and sent all his pent up excitement and frustration toward his jittery core.

Almost immediately, he could feel the change starting to take place. It was subtle and he could see why he never noticed it the first time...

His back relaxed as if his muscles had unclenched, his veins throbbed lightly and his entire being felt just that much stronger because of it. His vision started to become more clear; as if his glasses had been foggy and out of focus his entire life. Now everything seemed just a little more vivid.

His back suddenly started to grow heavier at a constant rate; he felt sensations coming from his new appendages as they brushed the inside of his school robes. He quickly pulled them off and tried to stretch out his growing appendages.

Within moments, the transformation felt complete. The entire process truly took only one or two seconds... but to Harry it felt like an unreal limbo where time ceased to be... for those few moments, he had never felt more attuned to his own body. Not just his physical body, but he could actually sense the more intangible aspects of himself. He could taste the power, smell the magic, and hear the vibrations that were at the core of his very being.

It was as if he was actually making contact with his own soul... it was an experience like no other... that was for sure.

Focusing his eyes, Harry turned to see the slightly agape stare of the headmaster.

"I must say, they're still just as impressive as last time." He remarked a little wondrously.

Breaking out of his self imposed trance, just as Harry was starting to become uncomfortable, the headmaster started to wave his wand about.

Almost immediately he stopped and stared at Harry in confusion.

"That can't be..." he remarked.

Restarting before Harry could ask, Dumbledore waved his hand again going through the motions more precisely while mumbling the incantation.

He frowned once more as his wand stayed un-reactive.

Guiding his long wand away from Harry he gave it an experimental shake and snap, instantly creating a few purple and silver sparks.

"Sir...?" Harry asked in confusion.

"One moment Harry..." Dumbledore said distractedly as he ran his wand parallel to Harry in a sweeping motion, while incanting something that sounded almost French.

"Espirite d'agnos" he said firmly.

A pale blue spell shot at Harry. Startled, Harry twitched away, as the spell made contact with his body.

Dumbledore watched as the boy with the black glossy wings flinched upon contact with his wand, only to have the spell sail right through him and hit the opposite wall.

Harry twirled around on the spot only to watch as the spell vanished through the wall like it had through his own body.

Turning back to stare at the headmaster for an explanation Harry was surprised to note the baffled look upon the man's face.

"Sir what's wrong?" Harry asked.

Dumbledore stared at the opposite wall for a moment seemingly unresponsive to Harry's queries.

Continuing to stare at the wall with an unusual look of surprise Dumbledore finally mumbled.

"The Agnos Verchelle series has never failed to diagnose the physical or metaphysical state of a human since its creation." The headmaster spoke baffled.

"And that means...?" Harry asked in confusion.

"We are truly blind to what is happening to you while you undergo this transformation." Dumbledore spoke worriedly.

Harry had a gut feeling that the man did not like to fly blind; something Harry had been doing most of his life.

"Well, I feel fine. I don't think there's anything wrong with me..." Harry stated in reassurance.

Dumbledore didn't look comforted by Harry's answer.

"I do not understand, I was able to run scans earlier when you had your first transformation..." Dumbledore mumbled to himself.

Focusing his ancient eyes on Harry, Dumbledore stared at him in serious thought.

"Harry, answer me honestly... If I were to ask you to never transform again, to never bring forth this change. Do you think you could do it?" He asked beseechingly.

“No...” Harry answered automatically; he didn't even need a moment to think about it.

Even if the urge that had driven him to obsessively think about transforming had not been there, his own innate curiosity and moments of peril that littered the key moments of his life would be too great a temptation.

Harry knew that he could not keep such a promise, no matter how much he believed he could at the time. The fact of the matter was, he didn't want to either.

He knew somewhere deep down that this was a an important time in his life, it might even be the key to defeating Voldemort once and for all... he could not and would not give all that up, even for the man before him

“Are you sure Harry; I ask you this because for some reason that I am unaware of, if you were dieing right now due to this change, I could not tell you... There is a good likely hood that that could happen as well, considering your situation. The ritual magic was unstable at best due to your connection.” Dumbledore warned earnestly.

The worried eyes stared back at the emerald irises begging for a different answer.

Harry thought as much. He had a nagging suspicion that there were going to be consequences to these new powers and abilities. The man had not admitted it but it would have been too convenient to have all the power given too him by his own arch foe without any side effects.

“I'm sorry sir, I can't promise that...” Harry said with regret.

Dumbledore sagged slightly but seemed to be expecting such an answer.

“Then I suppose that all I can do now is help you discover how to safely control your abilities...” The man admitted.

Harry nodded, fighting the urge to try and scratch at his wings.

Dumbledore closed his eyes for a moment and then opened them, in that instant he was a completely different man. The serious frown and saddened eyes, dispersed by the twinkle and affable smile.

"I take it you are as curious as I about your new wings..."
Dumbledore said with an easy smile.

Harry was startled by the sudden 180, but realized that he would probably do the same in certain situations... it was sometimes a little easier to do things you didn't want to do, if you were happy. Even if you truly weren't...

"Yes sir..." Harry stated awkwardly. Harry tried to stand confidently and portray a professional air about him but he was finding it a little awkward to do with his new appendages. The strange weight on his back made him feel like he was hunching over when he was in reality tilting backwards.

"Tell me Harry, are you getting any sensations from your wings. Hot cold, hard soft, pain...?" he asked in curiosity.

"Um, they feel like.... wings?" Harry said stupidly.

He didn't really know how else to describe them. They felt like arms except without fingers and covered in feathers.

"They feel a little chilly I suppose, but then again the room is kind of cold..." Harry said unsurely. "And itchy..."

"Can you try to move them for me..." Dumbledore instructed as he started to step back to give Harry room.

Harry nodded.

Feeling odd as if he were a dog at a kennel being asked to do tricks... he proceeded to will his wings away until they were spread as far away as possible. He made an awkward flapping motion.

The wings went up in a slightly curved shape and quickly pushed down. Harry was startled as the sudden force of the giant pairs of wings gave him enough force to feel lighter than a feather. For that single moment, Harry knew that he would be able to fly.

He was thrilled.

Dumbledore seemed to know this as well as he watched Harry's face as it gave off a goofy grin at the realization.

"I must say, I do envy you." Dumbledore said in confession.

Harry turned a surprised eye toward the headmaster.

"Pure flight, freedom from the troubles of the ground below, I think we both know you are capable of it...." Dumbledore admitted with his own fatherly smile.

"I imagine the escape of being able to leave your troubles below must be quite freeing..." he said in a reckless longing sort of way.

Harry had to concur. It was what he loved so much about flying. He would often stare wonderingly at Hedwig for hours on end as she soared the skies happily. She never seemed as truly happy as she did when she was free of her cage and above it all, literally and metaphorically.

"Now, the thing to wonder though is how to teach you to take flight..." Dumbledore admitted ruefully.

There was an odd twinkle in the man's eyes... Harry thought that he just might have already thought of that.

"Sir?" Harry asked.

"I would like to introduce you to your new trainer Harry... I fear he may be more of a taskmaster than your last." Dumbledore said with a smile.

Almost instantaneously a familiar music started to surround them, reverberating majestically around the large room.

In a puff of flames a scarlet phoenix appeared, landing on Dumbledore's shoulder.

Fawkes hopped on Dumbledore's shoulder for a few moments, its eyes staring in what Harry assumed to be surprise as it observed the winged boy in front of him.

It trilled a few notes and squawked a few squawks while looking at Harry.

"Hello old friend, I have a favour to ask of you..." Dumbledore spoke out loud.

The bird split its attention between Harry and its master, its wings flapping to keep it from falling off as it kept looking back and forth between the two.

It appeared the bird already had figured out what the favour might be.

"Lo Fawkes..." Harry greeted with an awkward wave.

The bird twittered a few more notes after Harry had inadvertently twitched his new wings while greeting the bird.

"If you could Fawkes... Harry would like to start to learn how to use his wings in flight, if you could help we would be greatly appreciative..." Dumbledore asked the bird.

Fawkes seemed to pause for a moment and stared at his master as if the man were insane... Something Harry often wondered himself.

A few seconds later he warbled an uncertain affirmative and took a few hasty flaps to steady himself as he leaped off the man and onto the floor below.

"Oh this should be entertaining." Dumbledore said in amusement.

Fawkes and Harry both turned annoyed eyes toward the man at his comment.

Dumbledore just smiled benignly and conjured himself a recliner and tea set as he sat to watch the show.

Harry stared at Fawkes uncertainly as he fidgeted under the birds stare.

Squawk

The bird spoke in authority as it wobbled forward with its head tilted up and its wings out wide.

Harry stared in confusion at the bird...

Squawk!

The bird cried once more while emphasizing its wings by flapping it a little more while still keeping them outstretched.

Understanding, Harry stretched his wings out as well

Fawkes thrilled a few notes of phoenix song approvingly.

Harry heard an odd snorting noise coming from the headmaster as he took a few sips of his tea.

Fawkes squawked a few indignant notes at the man whose eyes were filled with mirth.

Turning its head around the bird stared at Harry for a few moments; then suddenly retracted its left wing.

Harry parroted the bird retracting his right wing as the two faced off.

Fawkes released his left wing and did the same with his right. Harry followed along.

The bird then spread its wings out once more.

Harry followed suit. He felt like he was playing a game of monkey see monkey do... and he was the monkey. He tried not to stare in Dumbledore's direction... he knew the man was far more amused with the situation than Harry was.

Fawkes then ever so slowly raised both wings up high while arching them so the tips were pointed down slightly while the elbow like joint pointed up.

Harry tried to mimic the bird.

Fawkes gave an uncertain warble before hopping forward under Harry's left wing.

Flapping his wings, Fawkes hopped/flew up on top of the wing where the joint was; landing on the glossy black feathered appendage.

Fawkes wobbled a little but steadied himself while leaning forward and lightly pecking Harry on the right most side of the joint.

Uncertainly Harry raised that wing a little higher

Squawk!

Taking that as a reprimand Harry instead lowered it. Fawkes hopped onto the other side and started to uncertainly wobble to the very end of the wing tip.

Pecking at the tip, Fawkes did a sort of stomping motion on it. Harry lowered the tip down further.

Fawkes trilled a few notes in approval before flying off and back to the front to face Harry.

Harry feeling ridicules made a motion with his hand to conjure a wide mirror for himself.

He conjured an 8 foot high, 15 foot wide mirror. Harry stared in surprise at the sight before him.

There in his black school trousers and white shirt was a boy who had wings.

He knew he had wings, but he had not actually had the opportunity to see himself with the new additions yet.

He had to admit, he looked quite impressive. The pose Fawkes had Harry in right now was a pose he recognized from watching his own owl take flight so often. It was just odd to see him self in that pose.

His back was sprouting jet black wings, each about as long as Harry's full body length. The wings shimmered a little, there glossy nature almost like that of an otters coat while it lay in the water cracking open muscles...

The reflection of Fawkes in the mirror warbled and struck the same pose.

Squawk

It announced and ever so slowly started to raise its wings from that pose to one where its wing tips were pointed about 45 degrees above the horizon.

Copying Fawkes pose, Harry felt the muscles in his appendages stretch out to their furthest extent.

Fawkes ever so slowly, while keeping the wings at the same length but keeping them slightly bent to keep that curved appearance, pushed down.

Harry mimicked the little bird and felt that same lifting force.

The size and span of his wings gave an incredible lift, overcoming whatever lack in aerodynamics his own body provided him. He had not even been beating his wings very hard, yet he had felt that gust of air and vacuum pressure above each wing pull him up slightly.

Fawkes flapped his own wings to keep steady as Harry unintentionally created a gust of wind below him, blowing the little bird back a bit.

Fawkes instead seemed quite pleased, trilling a few notes he redid the motion a few more times until he started to overcome the force of gravity by beating those wild majestic wings of his.

Squawk.

Fawkes intoned, Commanding Harry to mimic.

Harry bolstered by the phoenix tones did as commanded and bent his knees slightly as if he were about to jump and started to flap his wings while going through the motions the phoenix had had him go through.

Feeling the lifting force increase Harry started to pump faster and faster....

The floor below was experiencing a wind that rippled Harry's dress pants and blew his forgotten robe away. Even Dumbledore's own dress robes rippled upon contact with the strong gust as he sat meters away.

Feeling as if he was almost there, Harry raised his wings high for one final strong push and using his legs leapt up in sync with his downward thrust.

For that brief moment, Harry knew what it meant to fly.

He beat his wings quickly and fervently while looking down and seeing the floor below him getting farther away.

'I'm flying...' Harry thought in wonder.

Hearing a clapping noise he looked down; he spotted the amazed eyes of his headmaster as he joyously clapped for the teen's success.

That was as far as Harry got before Harry experienced the next sensation.

Gravity

Harry beat one of his wings a little too strongly and the other a little too weakly, his balance shifted to the right. Trying to compensate Harry tried to beat in reverse.

Suddenly he over compensated and he found his body suddenly in a 70 degree angle to the ground. Beating fervently Harry tried to correct his mistake, but was too late...

Harry fell from the 4 foot high he had attained and landed in a heap of wings and arms.

"Ow...." Harry moaned as he experienced pain from the awkward landing. He had landed on his wing joints, and the back of his head. His neck felt stiff and he knew he was going to have a crick in it for a while.

Trying to stand up, he found it was harder than it appeared.

The added weight meant he couldn't really sit up, let alone turn over. It was like he was a turtle except instead of his shell preventing him from righting himself, his wings were doing it instead.

He beat his wings slightly trying to get them to help him in his endeavour to stand... it was no use, all it did was make him look like he was having a seizure of some sort.

"Harry..." a voice asked amused. Stopping his attempts he looked up into the upside down face of his headmaster.

The man's hand went out in an offer of assistance and Harry decided to save himself the embarrassment and grabbed the man's weathered limb.

He took a firm hold and pulled the youth up while twisting to get the two facing each other as Harry was upgraded to an upright sitting position.

“That was a valiant effort my boy. I dare say I shall not forget this moment for a long while.” The man said with a crooked smile.

Harry tried to ignore the blush that crept up the sides of his face, that and the squawking that sounded a little too much like laughter.

After being subtly teased by the bird and school administrator for a few minutes they decided to try again. Harry managed a solid few feet and this time awkwardly landed on his feet. It wasn't as instinctive as riding a broom was, but it was much easier than Harry assumed it should have been for someone who wasn't born with wings.

Dumbledore said that Harry would have time to practice the following Sunday but felt it was time to experiment some more with Harry's other abilities.

Dumbledore conjured a series of weights and asked Harry to lift each one.

Harry did so with little effort until he reached the 160 lb bundles.

In the end Harry found that he could lift 4 times his own body weight and could leave impressions in the handles if he squeezed hard enough.

Something that gave Harry quite the ego boost, considering he was still a little scrawny, even if he was at least now starting to develop some muscle on his meagre frame.

The next thing the man tested was what startled both of them.

“Harry, please fire into the ball as you had before.” Dumbledore instructed after pulling out another ball with three sets of concentric rings.

Harry waved his wand lazily while incanting a mined Lumos inside the ball.

There was a crinkling noise before suddenly the ball exploded in a flash of light.

Startled Harry and Dumbledore both waved their wands forward in a motion to create a shield to protect themselves from the bright explosions.

When Harry opened his eyes it was only to stare at the pieces of glass that lay embedded in his foot thick shimmering shield. A shield that was supposed to be 3 inches thick, max...

A shield that had enveloped both wizards and had cut a hole into the solid floor.

Dumbledore's own shield was inside reinforcing Harry's shield needlessly; the same type of shield, that was exactly 3 inches thick and stopped at the floor without passing through.

After that, Harry had cautiously handed the man his wand and reattempted his Lumos with his wandless magic on a spare ball...

The ball filled with the gaseous magic at once as expected. Harry tried to recreate the shield wandlessly... it worked as expected as well.

Cautiously, Dumbledore asked Harry to perform a wingardium with his wand.

Dumbledore brought forth his weights he had conjured and placed them at the end of the room. His instructions were to gently lift them with his wand.

Harry carefully pulled out his wand and swished and flicked, while pointing his wand at the weights.

Almost immediately, the weights lifted up....off the floor in a jerky motion.

Harry sighed in relief.

Then the weights were gone, right through the window out and away like a bullet straight into the sea before them. Harry watched the massive splash that shot up in the projectiles wake; a good 7 or 8 feet...

"Whoops..." Harry remarked.

"Indeed...." Dumbledore said as he walked up at his side. He stared through the newly created opening. Spider webbed cracks shot forth in all directions and some of the framing for the windows themselves were distorted if not in pieces.

Harry squinted at the rippling water that was visible from their position in the tower... something that exemplified just how strong a force the weights had been shot at; considering their distance...

As the remains of the window pain fell, Dumbledore rhetorically spoke...

"Needless to say, I do not recommend you using your wand while transformed."

Harry just nodded dumbly, wondering how many fish he had just massacred...

... ..

Dumbledore and Harry had spent most of the rest of their time together piecing together Harry's limits with his wand when transformed. Dumbledore said that eventually, Harry would be able to regain the use of his wand when transformed; it would only take some practice.

Dumbledore said that now that he was so attuned to his own magic in his transformed state, the wand was too sensitive for use. Harry would have to learn to use an impressive amount of conscious control when using his wand. Luckily transforming back took little to no effort

at all and the wand sensitivity did not transfer over into Harry's normal state.

Something that did transfer over though was Harry's own awareness of his core. Dumbledore had taken Harry through some drills and exercises with his wandless magic until he could feel himself reaching his limits.

It wasn't so much tapping his magical well dry, as it was becoming too saturated with his own magic as it consumed his entire being. Harry thought of it like being a sponge and being unable to carry anymore water.

Harry was pleased to note that his limits were well beyond anything he could think of reaching unless he was in an overly taxing fight.

Something odd though was the eagerness to which Harry's magic worked.

When Harry had taken to conjuring objects or substances he had barely had to think about them before his magic had willed them into existence. It was different than conjuring, where Harry had to consciously build the object up from nothing. Harry's magic somehow just created the objects right away. Something Harry and Dumbledore were both mightily impressed with.

Deciding to meet up again next week, the last time before school would let out for the winter holidays, Harry and Dumbledore went their separate ways.

... ..

Harry hummed to himself pleasantly as he strolled under his invisibility cloak towards the Gryffindor common room. He thought he had made excellent progress that night. He was no longer freaking out about the fact that he had wings, seeing all the advantages they had provided him.

Up ahead in the dark corridor Harry could see that the portrait to the Gryffindor Common room was empty once more of the Fat Lady.

Harry wondered where she so often went at night. He amused himself with the thought that maybe she and sir Cadogen shared late night trysts together while the students slept.

Seeing no problem, Harry used his wandless magic to turn the handle from within the Gryffindor common room and pulled the portrait door open.

Still clad under the invisibility cloak Harry slipped past the empty canvas and shut the door gently.

Turning away from the door Harry strolled away and found himself standing face to face with Hermione Granger.

Of course she could not see him, as he was still under the invisibility cloak, but she already knew he owned one. Harry was right to believe that she had watched as the door mysteriously open and close, seemingly of its own volition.

Already knowing it was coming, Harry slid the invisibility cloak of his head to reveal his frowning features.

“Harry Potter, What do you think you are doing out so late....” Hermione lectured immediately, not surprised at all as Harry revealed himself.

Over her shoulder he spotted his other friend who sat fidgeting uncomfortably in his seat by the dieing fire.

He sent Harry an apologetic wince at Hermione’s tone of voice.

“I was out...” Harry said unapologetically.

“Where...?” she demanded.

“Not here....” Harry said sarcastically. He didn’t feel like playing these games and being apologetic for not telling her. He was tired and he had class tomorrow.

Stepping by the fuming girl he started to head towards the staircase towards his dorms.

“Don’t walk away from me Harry Potter....!” Hermione yelled angrily while pulling Harry by the shoulder to face him.

Harry stopped surprised at her manhandling of his person. It was an unspoken rule within the three friend’s friendship, to never lay a hand on one another in anger. Hermione had just bent that rule with her roughness.

“Unhand me...” Harry said dangerously as he stared icily at her hand on his shoulder.

Hermione stared at him uncertainly for a moment before the scorn returned to her eyes and she shoved him backwards into the room, following by jabbing at his chest with her index finger as she spoke.

“I am a Prefect.... You will tell me where you have been or so help me I will...” Each word was punctuated by another jab into Harry’s chest.

Having enough of that, Harry stopped his backwards momentum and firmly grabbed a hold of the girls hand.

“Do not touch me Hermione....” Harry threatened.

Hermione stared into Harry’s angry eyes; something in them must have conveyed the truth of Harry’s threat. Snapping her wrist away from Harry’s firm grip she leaned forward, without touching him and tried to stare him directly in the eye.

“Where were you...” She demanded once more.

“None of your business.” Harry spat back.

Hermione eyed him wildly. “10 points from Gryffindor....” She condemned.

Harry stared at her mockingly...

"Fine, when McGonagall asks, you can tell her why you took 10 points from her own house.... See if it stands." Harry challenged. Already knowing the threat of points were meaningless to him.

Hermione stopped in surprise. "You were with McGonagall?" She asked in surprise.

"I don't have to tell you anything..." Harry stated confidently, neither confirming nor denying her assumption.

She growled in anger.... "Honestly, what's so important that you can't tell us...." She yelled in anger.

"I'm going to bed... I don't feel much like playing 20 questions with you." Harry dismissively stated.

"Hermione maybe you should...." Ron spoke hesitantly.

"What is it Harry; are you doing something you know is wrong..." Hermione accused.

"Hermione I don't think...." Ron started to defend. Harry refused to look back at his friend as she further condemned him within her own mind.

"Are you learning dark magic... are you stooping to Voldemorts level...." She taunted loudly.

"Hermione you know Harry wouldn't...."

Harry stopped, his mind was picking up on something.... Suddenly a stream of thoughts and emotions were being flung at him like a sling shot.

'That pigheaded fool... Just tell me! Maybe if I tell him he's behaving just like the adults were last year, keeping secrets from him, causing him to not have enough information and killing Sirius... maybe then he'll listen to reason.' Hermione's voice fumed in his head. The way

the thought ended smugly and the plan to emotionally manipulate Harry were what really sent Harry over the edge.

“What do you think you’re doing Harry... Are you going to...?”

“What Kill you all like I killed Sirius, is that what you were going to say!” Harry finished for her. Shocking her by literally finishing her thought for her.

Ron starred agape at the two. Somehow a nagging sensation within him told him that that was what Hermione was about to say.

“I...” Hermione stuttered.

“ ... thought that maybe you could manipulate my emotions to tell you all my deep dark secrets... thought that maybe you could play on my godfather’s death and break me so you could remould me back into the quiet little boy who asked how high when you told him to jump!” Harry finished for her.

“Harry I...”

Hermione stopped, and like Ginny, a flare of anger re-awoke within her. Righteously she puffed out her chest and stared coldly at the teen.

“Don’t try and turn this around on me Harry Potter, I’m not the one keeping secrets from my friends... Now out with it, you tell me this instant what you have been doing or.... So help me...”

“What.... So help you what... you’ll nag me, tell McGonagall I refuse to give you unfettered access into my personal life, follow me around and try and spy on me some more....” Harry challenged.

“If you don’t tell me... were through Harry.” She finished coldly.

The ultimatum had been set, And Harry had never responded well to ultimatums.

“Fine then, I’m sorry it had to end this way. Good bye Granger.” Harry spat heatedly.

Hermione’s and Ron’s shocked faces were all Harry saw as he stormed away and up the stairs.

Stopping halfway he stopped and leaned against the wall. Pressing his head against the cool stone.

He couldn’t believe what had just happened. He had finally done it; he’d pushed one of his oldest friends away. He didn’t feel righteous or noble, he only felt lousy and frustrated.

A faint mumbling noise could be heard coming from below.

Seeing a shadow coming, and not wanting to be seen in his emotional state, Harry whipped the invisibility cloak over himself, just in time as Hermione’s feet made an appearance at the base of the stairs.

She was about to take a step up towards Harry’s direction, her face unrepentant but not angry either.

Suddenly a hand shot out and grasped her by her shoulder.

“Let go Ron....” Hermione said with a dead voice as she tugged at her arm. Her face staring past Harry’s towards his landing.

“Leave him be Hermione... you’ve done enough tonight.” Ron’s voice accused.

She stopped and twirled on the spot to stare at the red head angrily.

“Me, What did I do?” she spat back venomously.

“Was Harry right. Were you going to accuse him of that...” Ron said dangerously.

“I... of course not. I would never....” Hermione mumbled back barely audible to the teens.

"It sure seemed that way. I know you've been keeping an eye on Harry for a while now, ever since Snape mentioned training in class...." Ron stated.

"Doesn't that bother you...? He's cutting us out. This could be just like the department of mysteries all over again. We barely survived that!" Hermione shot back in a harsh whisper.

"And he didn't want us to come. That was our choice so don't even try and insinuate differently, you know how Harry is, are you trying to get him to feel guilty about that." Ron said in warning.

"That's not what I meant..." Hermione snapped back, while tugging her shoulder free of the red head.

"Then be careful how you say things because sometimes I don't even know with you anymore." Ron warned.

"What's that supposed to mean." She asked coldly.

"You know exactly what it means, I've noticed how you've been behaving, always choosing your words carefully, pushing Harry's buttons, trying to provoke a reaction out of him. You're causing just as much a problem here as he is..." Ron pointed out.

"I have not..." Hermione defended, while not looking at the teen in the eye.

"Have you been aiming for this moment Hermione, did you think that by pushing him so far he would finally snap and tell you everything you wanted to know...." Ron taunted ignoring her.

"He's up to something dangerous.... You can't deny it Ron. We both know he's keeping secrets."

"Of course he is; so am I, so are you. Were 16 Hermione, we don't share everything that happens in our lives with each other. Look me in the eye and tell me you aren't keeping your own secrets; that you

don't have your own skeletons you don't hide from us..." Ron challenged.

"That's different, Harry's keeping secrets about you-know-who. What if he's receiving visions again. He's always so tired and secretive, what if it's like Ginny and Voldemort's slowly possessing him like he did her." Hermione warned.

"Don't use Ginny like that." Ron said in a cold voice that startled Hermione with the venom from the normally easy going lad.

"I know for a fact that Harry's tired mostly from his studies... And you. He trusts me enough to tell me some things because I don't demand it." Ron admitted.

"You know... you've known what he's been up to all this time." Hermione whispered harshly in incredulity.

"I don't know everything but I know enough that I'm not worried. The only thing I'm worried about is the way you've been pushing him. You're lucky he hadn't snapped under pressure you've been putting him under sooner. You should be ashamed Hermione, I certainly wouldn't want my friends treating me the way you've been treating Harry." Ron spat angrily.

Harry deciding that he had heard enough soundlessly wandered up to his dorm room and jumped into his bed without changing. Closing the blinds around his he tried hard to drown out the murmurs and harsh whispers that were travelling up the stairs.

He had to admit, he was grateful to Ron for sticking by him like he did. He had tried his hardest not to drag him into their fight like he did but it was always nice to have backup.

Suddenly the mumbling stopped and Harry heard footsteps approach.

The door gave a groan and creek as his friend entered and walked by Harry's bed.

The moonlight reflected Ron's shadow off of Harry's curtain and Harry could see his looming form hunch over as he sat on his own bed.

"I know you heard us Harry..." Ron said out loud.

Harry didn't bother to say anything; instead he pulled back his curtain to allow the two to stare at each other unimpeded.

"Most of it ya I did..." Harry admitted.

"Well in case you missed it, Hermione told me that I should keep a watch out for you, to tell her if you have been behaving out of the ordinary. Basically I'm supposed to be your shadow until you tell her whatever it is you've been doing." Ron admitted out loud without any shame or hesitation.

"Oh..." Harry said in surprise. He had not expected such a frank answer.

"Yea... I hope you know that I don't mind you keeping secrets Harry. I understand that, I really do." Ron asked.

"I know, thank you." Harry said in appreciation.

Ron nodded. As he stood up from his bed and started to pull the covers off his bed.

"Hermione did make one good point though...." Ron said conversationally.

Harry stiffened at that... worriedly he listened to his friend.

"I know your keeping more important secrets from us, things that could be dangerous to you. I'm telling you now....I want in on those secrets; I think I've earned that right. You don't have to tell me now, but one day when you're ready, I want to know." Ron stated.

With that the redhead vanished behind his bed curtains, leaving behind a pensive teenager to stare thoughtfully at the spot where he saw his friend last.

Harry had a lot to think about...

AN: Not my best chapter but necessary. I kind of rushed the wings bit to give you all the gist of his powers. Credits to firefromabove for one of the jokes I did with Harry and his wings. Too recap and explain further if it isn't clear:

When Harry is transformed... he is super strong, can fly and is practically omnipotent when wielding his true wand. That last bit is important. Clearly Harry can't have too much power as then all he would have to do is think it and Voldemort is dead... end of story.

There are limits and I will cover this aspect more as the story takes shape, but it needs to be said now, Harry plus his phoenix feather friend are a force to be reckoned with when he is transformed. Right now Harry doesn't understand how to wield such power so pretty much he loses control quickly.

Also some of you might point out a plot hole.

Dumbledore did do scans on Harry when he was transformed in his private quarters... why not now. Simply... in my mind, he could only do it the first time, Harry's magic had just undergone the transformation and it was like a mini ritual. When Harry transformed back, the ritual ended and his magic was locked into that standard, which coincidentally also changed him significantly while transformed.

Harry is no longer human when he transformed... that's the only reason why the spells Dumbledore was using wouldn't work. I've said too much as is.

I'm thinking I'll be done year six of this story in about 12 chapters... estimate(don't hold me to it)

After that... well let's just say a lot of questions are going to be answered. How the muggles are suppressing magic, where the

78000 came from, muggle inspectors, where are they?, nodes what part do they have in this little tale. All those will be answered and more.

Anyway I'm going to start writing chapter 21 while I still have time. If I'm extremely lucky I might be able to start chapter 22.... That's the one that I hope will leave you all at the edges of your seats.

Till next time.

Quazi

Chapter 21 – Calm before the storm

“Wotcher Punks!” A stern elderly voice grouched.

Harry gaped slightly as he watched his new Defence against the Dark Arts instructor limp into the room.

Her bed headed straggly hair, her wild suspicious eyes, her drably knitted cloak...

The woman was ancient in appearance, as rotund as Umbridge, and as shift eyed as moody... but Harry already suspected deception from her.

She wobbled to the front of the class with her walking stick in hand, occasionally snapping it back and forth between desks to whack the shins of unsuspecting students.

“Listen up you rowdy hooligans... I’ll be your new defence against the Dark Arts teacher from now on. I don’t want to hear any back talk from yea... If I detect any sass, you’ll rue the day you ran into me....” She scolded with ferocity unbecoming of her age.

“And who might you be...” Malfoy’s voice demanded arrogantly.

“No Sass!” The women snapped back.

A smattering of murmurs arose; the women with a speed unnatural to her age, snapped her walking stick loudly against the front table.

“Quite you whipper snappers...” She yelled loudly.

“Whipper snappers?” a voice murmured unsurely around the back.

“I said no Sass!” She snapped quickly. Her aged voice starting to strain as her lips twitched.

“For today’s lesson... tell me ways a wizard or witch might choose to be stealthy.” The women ordered.

Pointing her walking stick immediately at Lavender, eliciting a squeak from the girl at the cane swift movements.

“Umm, Polyjuice mam...”

“Good girl, a fine way to go about without being noticed, though highly illegal to brew unless properly sanctioned by the ministry of magic.” She warned.

Pointing her cane again, this time at Neville. “What about you boy, don’t think your sexy looks will sway me, name me another method to go unnoticed. something that does not need to be prepared before hand.” She ordered.

Neville stuttered at her comment and blushed; but worked up the courage to answer.

“Disillusionment... mam.” He answered haltingly.

“Excellent, can you demonstrate the spell...” She cheered leeringly.

Neville fidgeted but quickly tapped himself over the head with his own wand and turned invisible to the room.

Malfoy who had been chuckling to himself as he watched Longbottom fidget under the women perverse stare, halted as the class whispered in respectful awe at the boys accomplishment. Most had been in Harry’s D.A. when he had covered the disillusionment spell and knew how tricky it could be.

Turning visible again, the women smiled frightfully.

“Ah, brains to go with that body as well, a keeper you are boy.” She congratulated.

Looking around the room in false thought she contemplated her next victim.

“Hmm, let’s see. You the boy with the bed head, name me another method.” She announced while staring down Harry.

Harry already onto her just stared back slightly amused.

“You could be born a Metamorph mam...” he answered back pointedly but still respectfully.

The women’s demeanour suddenly changed. The frightening smile seemed to morph into a true one, a bright and cheery wide grin that brought new life to her aged appearance.

“Sexy buggers they are...” She announced in approval.

Harry grinned in humour at the confirmation.

“Mr Potter has described a fine way to disguise oneself. For instance, a metamorph could be anyone; they could be your friends, your neighbour’s... your teachers even.” She said with a Cheshire grin.

Immediately the women before them stood up to her full height swung her cane in a circle and held it above her right shoulder like a rifle... and started to change.

Her hair shortened and become a dark purple. Her aged face started to shrink and smooth into a rounded heart shape and her corpulent body shrank down into a more attractive form.

“Wotcha Punks.” She announced cheerily.

The class broke out into whispers at the appearance of the youthful teacher who had just transformed before their very eyes.

Tonks waved the cane she still held around her body and her drabs morphed into a long black robe that barely covered her grunge boots, jeans, and shirt which stated that “Wand size does matter.”

The cane for that matter itself melted away to reveal a 12 inch wand within her slender hands.

“Name’s Tonks, Dumbledore was on the sauce when he hired me so I fear you’ll just have to suffer for a while until your next replacement arrives.” Tonks announced with cheer.

Some of the students laughed nervously at the Aurors comment.

Harry thought that it would be an interesting few months.

... ..

Professor McGonagall always prided herself on her relationship with her students; specifically the students of her own house.

She always aimed for a strict exterior, making it obvious that at the end of the day, her word was law. But instead of being impersonal and distant as one might assume, she liked to observe from the sidelines; and when she believed the situation would call for it, she would invite said students into her domain for biscuits and tea while she had a chat to set things down the appropriate path.

Truly, she cared for each of her students in ways they would never fully grasp. They were her legacy; for the rest of their lives, she would have left a mark on them, something intangible that they would never be rid of. Something that whether they admitted it or not would mould them into the people they were going to become.

To some, she was the no nonsense totalitarian, who made it clear that the breaking of rules would not be tolerated.

Some, she was the strict but fair professor who would always know if you weren’t giving your all for a particular task...

And to those few... the rare students who needed her most; she was Professor McGonagall, the one who was there.

McGonagall prided herself on finding those rare students who would need her the most; finding them and helping them set their lives straight. Whether it be with firm words admonishing them for taking the foolish path, a motherly gesture of understanding, or simply a shoulder to weep their troubles upon...

McGonagall had found such a person for this generation, that she felt needed her simple yet powerful touch.

Truly this student needed her the most, their life turned inside out and upside down since that faithful day magic was revealed to be real to them. McGonagall often wondered to herself whether it would have been kinder to have kept them from the world they so rightfully belonged to, if only to stave off the torment.

They were simply unable to cope, and the life before them was too much; a whirl wind of activity and mystery that constantly kept them two steps back when they tried to take one step forward.

That student...Hermione Granger.

As often as it appeared to be, the students that needed her the most were often the ones with such promise and potential. Hermione had been a shining star her first year, surpassing all their expectations, overcoming an awkward beginning and making loyal and caring friends.

She was unbelievably mature for her age, reasoning things that often the wiser and more experienced would overlook.

And unfortunately that is as far as she went.

McGonagall often wondered to herself whether that maturity was actually a sign of her prodigy like intellect, or what she believed was expected of her. She tried so hard, made so much effort to fit in, but she always went that extra step too far.

It wasn't just in her homework, which was something to be commended usually; it was in her personal life as well.

Socially, she had never advanced past her eleven year old self, and in there lay the problem.

For years that prodigy of an eleven year old had survived the school experience, simply because she was just that much more prepared

for the world around her than her peers were; but as time went on, that initial step was no longer enough. The other students were beginning to catch up, and soon they would surpass her.

If that were to happen McGonagall wondered what would happen to the girl that she had introduced into the world she was truly unready for.

Through a series of gossip starved students, the whispers of paintings, and her own variants on gaining information, she knew for a fact that the situation was already set in motion.

Harry Potter, almost the polar opposite of Hermione; started out as an average student, always aimed to go unnoticed by teachers and peers alike. Gradually he started to progress though, started to grow into a more confident and outspoken young man who took his responsibilities and tragic adversities at a commendable stride.

He had his dark moments, the darkest she had ever seen, but he also seemed to have the opposite as well. He had achieved so much this year. Unfortunately in the process he had surpassed Hermione Granger and the girl had not been ready for it.

There was an easy solution to the entire situation, have Harry Potter revert backwards into the shy and quiet boy he once was.

That was clearly not an option. She could not scold him for doing what everyone was meant to do; growing up. She stared down unnoticed from her seat at the head table with the other teachers.

Hermione Granger sat alone at the Gryffindor table.

On either side of her, her fellow gryffindors were chatting up a storm, discussing there weekends and other youthful things. Her friend, Mr. Weasley sat chatting amicably with Neville Longbottom not two seats away. Both had become surprisingly close over the year, something that pleased the Professor for Neville's sake.

But truly Hermione sat alone. She was seated amidst the chaos of her table, between friends and peers, yet she made no move to

interact with anyone... and likewise, no one made any move to interact with her.

Every now and then, when she wasn't spooning herself soup or reading through another library book, she would stare with unfocused eyes toward the seat opposite her. The seat which was empty for more than a few meals.

"Knut for your thought..."

"I'd like to think my thoughts were worth more than that..." McGonagale briskly retorted turning away from her observations of the girl.

"Of course, but I am quite frugal..." Dumbledore shot back amusedly.

McGonagale tutted to herself, not really interested in the banter they were accustomed to.

"Do you know where Mr. Potter is...?" She asked while turning back to stare at the empty seat.

"He is within the castle... Do you need to speak with him?" He asked curiously.

McGonagall tutted once more, simply because she knew somewhere beneath the twinkling eyes it aggravated the man to no end.

"Mr. Potter has been absent from quite a few meals lately." McGonagall commented airily.

"Is that all, I believe the house elves have taken to feeding him directly as of late." Dumbledore stated in reassurance.

"Shouldn't we put a stop to that, the house elves do have other duties to attend to...?" McGonagall asked in annoyance, thinking up excuses for the boy to interact more with Hermione.

She had concluded that the only approach she could take at the moment was to bring the two together and hopefully their proximity

would patch up their friendship. She tempted herself with the idea of pulling a Serverus and giving them both detentions for no good reason, if only to allow for it.

In her mind, Hermione needed that support her friendship with one Harry James Potter had provided. She needed to gradually wean herself off whatever it was that the boy had been providing her, as going cold turkey was clearly not working for her.

"I dare say, the house elves beg for more work to do. Considering Hogwarts core Nodes... I'm surprised they haven't built new turrets for the castle with how much energy they have." Dumbledore answered jokingly.

"...And I see nothing wrong with students visiting the kitchens; I myself find it quite enjoyable to be down in the house elves abode."

"But surely, you can see how this can negatively affect Harry..." McGonagall asked.

She was grasping at straws now and she knew it, but feeling it important to convince another to see it too was all she could think of.

She could really do very little without revealing her hand. Pairing the two Gryffindors together in her class really did very little considering how much she had emphasized quiet work in her class room. Especially considering Mr. Potters surprising grasp of the new material she was covering in class, often finishing practical exercises within minutes, with Hermione following in his tracks soon after. A situation that only left for awkward silence between the two, they refrained from communicating to each other during this this period of silence. something the Professor would have encouraged this once.

She often wondered how he she had managed to pull those others out of their dark places, but then again each student was unique in their own rights; she had never taken the same approach twice.

"Oh?"

“He is cutting himself off from his friends, all his time is spent studying and training... It can’t be healthy for him, he needs to socialize and not withdraw from those that care for him.” McGonagall lectured.

That was more than a slight exaggeration on her part, as she knew that Harry was still amicable with Ron and Neville, though they spent so little time together, and the relationship between him and Ms. Lovegood was still the talk of the school grapevine...

But in essence that was what his life had boiled down to. She often wondered how he had managed to do it all. She could remember her own youth, and though she was a fair student, she often felt the strain of maintaining her grades and balancing her social life. The boy had much more on his plate and still seemed to be doing commendably well.

Dumbledore seemed to catch on to what McGonagall was not saying.

Turning his head he stared at Hermione Granger in a pondering fashion.

“I take it you are concerned about Ms. Granger as well...” He stated.

She fumbled for a second, hating the man for being so intuitive, but quickly regained her bearings.

“Mr. Potter has much on his plate, but Ms. Granger does draw some strength from their friendship. I understand that they have had an argument which has led to the end of that relationship. I am more than concerned Albus... as you should be.” McGonagall stated crisply. Technicly the teachers were supposed to be impartial to their students, but one could not help it if they took more interest in certain students than others. As long as the other students weren't suffering as a result, McGonagall felt no remorse in taking an interest in particular students lives.

“You are correct, but this is a matter between those two, we have no authority to intervene.” Dumbledore stated sadly.

“They are but children Albus, they need guidance, with the proper support and motivation the two could be proper friends once more...” McGonagall urged.

“You are correct in many ways Minerva, but you are wrong in one aspect.”

“Oh...” She stated; her voice laced with warning.

“They are no longer children, they may be young but they have each earned the right to be given the same privacy you or I would ask for... you must look past their age and see them for who they are and not how old they are...” Dumbledore said with a significant stare.

McGonagall hated it when the man became preachy, simply because he held too much sway with his words and often convinced her.

“Never the less, you can not deny that it would be better for the two to resolve there differences. Surely you could suggest to Mr. Potter how difficult it has been for Ms. Granger.”

“I can suggest all I want Minerva, but it would do no good if it falls upon complacent ears. Let them try to resolve things at their own pace first.” Dumbledore suggested.

“You know I do not like to put things off Albus...” She harrumphed.

“True... but humour an old man this once.” He suggested.

McGonagall tutted once more in reprisal, but acquiesced. She couldn't help but feel that by doing so, she might have failed her charge.

... ..

The end of November came and went with an early bout of snow announcing the approach of the winter holidays.

The sign up sheets had already been posted up for those who wished to stay for the holidays. Harry was pleased to note that for once he

could actually claim to be going home for the holidays and actually look forward to it. Remus had started to send him almost daily letters asking him questions like his favourite foods, to updates on their plans for the break.

Harry was looking forward to the time together with the werewolf... yet there was also a part of him that was more nervous than he could ever truly remember.

He felt like he had to be on his best behaviour, as if he were staying at the Weasley's. No matter how many times he had read Remus write "our home," he could not picture it as his just yet.

He suddenly realized how little he knew the man in general. A year as a teacher and some semi casual conversation at Sirius's did not a family make.

Doubts started to cloud Harry's mind as he hoped he wouldn't put the man off after living with him. He feared being rejected by the man once he had no one left to accept him.

He feared being rejected at all...

Walking down the halls alone as today was the last Hogsmead trip before break, he idly wandered the corridors until he stopped to spy Professor Flitwick and Hagrid decorate the great hall.

Watching the large Christmas trees being placed carefully and decorated with baubles and trinkets, led Harry to a frightful realization.

'Presents...'

He had forgotten completely. He also had no current way to go and do such necessary shopping as he was currently imprisoned within the castle for his own safety.

He was about to bang his head roughly against the stone wall in despair when his eyes latched onto his only possible saviours.

Lounging at the head table chatting amicably with a green and red themed headmaster was Tonks, who's hair and eyes, respectively, were just as festive as the man's clothing.

"I'm on the sauce am I...?" The man laughed.

"You heard about that..." the women said in askance.

"Oh you have so much to learn my dear..." the man said amusedly.

Seeing the smiling and lounging two Harry resolved his will and strode forward with his back straight and his head held high.

Both faculty members spotted his approach and turned in greeting.

"Good afternoon Mr. Potter."

"Wotcher Harry."

"Professors..." Harry greeted with a nod to each.

"The decorations are coming along quite nicely; I believe the school will be as enchanting as ever..." Dumbledore stated in pleasure as he observed Hagrid and Flitwick work.

Immediately a cackling noise emanated around the room before a tree tilted over smashing into the Ravenclaw table sending baubles crashing in all directions. Professor Flitwick, who had been on top of a tall ladder by the large fir, wobbled precariously. Hagrid positioned himself below the man as he tried to prepare to catch him should he fall.

"Eventually..." Dumbledore added in optimism.

He waved his wand, pulling the tree back to its upright position, earning a thankful nod from the two teachers after they had steadied themselves.

“Sir, I have a favour to ask...” Harry stated hesitantly. He might as well come out and say it; there was no need to pussyfoot about the subject.

“Oh, by all means...” Dumbledore asked intrigued.

“You see, I haven’t had a chance to get presents yet and seeing how close it is to break, and how I’m not sure when or if I’ll see my friends before school starts again... I was hoping I could go shopping today.” Harry asked.

“Say no more Harry; in all honesty I had expected you to ask me sooner to be let out of the castle. As charming as it is, a person does need an escape from it every now and then.” The man smiled.

Harry returned a smile in relief.

“So you’re buying presents... what’cha getting me?” Tonks asked innocently.

“I, uh...”

“Don’t worry, I’ll take you Harry. I assume you’ll need a guard?” She questioned while turning to stare at the headmaster for confirmation.

“Very true, I find myself with quite a bit of spare time today as well, I shall accompany you, if only too keep Nymphadora from finding out what she will receive.” Dumbledore cheekily answered.

Tonks winced as the man intoned her most hated name, but said nothing in reprisal.

Harry, himself was unsure how he had managed to wrangle a metamorph and a headmaster to accompany him to go Christmas shopping.

Peeves cackles were ominous and forboding as wreathes started to attack a group of first years, wrangling them together and pulling them into the belly of the large fir trees like a demented life preserver.

... ..

At Tonks Suggestion, they decided upon Diagon alley as their shopping district of choice.

Dumbledore agreed and with a generous amount of floo powder from within the headmaster's office, they converged in the Leaky Cauldron. Landing in a private room Dumbledore immediately waved his wand about his person and blinked in and out of existence before becoming visible once more.

"Corr..." Tonks whistled, impressed at the feat of magic.

"Why thank you Ms. Tonks. " Dumbledore's remarked humbly.

"What?" Harry asked dumbly as he stared at the two.

"I think both you and I, Mr. Potter, would attract too much attention; as such, I have localized a notice me not charm around my person. It does help when one does not want to be seen. You only see me now because I wish you to."

"That seems useful..." Harry remarked in slight envy, he could see the use for such a charm, especially in his life.

"Indeed, unfortunately a person must place it upon themselves for it to work otherwise their own magic would resist... I shall teach you at our next appointment." Dumbledore offered pleasantly while walking quietly towards the door.

Walking outside, following Dumbledore's lead, they followed a corridor towards the familiar interior of the Leaky Cauldron. It was packed full of holiday shoppers and other clientele.

Tom was busy at the counter taking orders and serving meals. A festive garland wrapped jauntily about his head as he served mead to a group of burly wizards who guffawed loudly.

Harry was glad the man was too distracted to notice him as he was not in the mood for another round of "bless my soul, it's Harry Potter."

Dumbledore himself, walked confidently on; the crowd's stair simply rolling off the man. As Harry had been behind him, they never seemed to notice him as well.

Deciding to use the anonymity the public had given him, Harry Tonks and the invisible Dumbledore followed the familiar path to the entrance of the alley.

Harry just barely avoided being run over by a woman who was so laden with packages and other knick knacks that she barely noticed the boy in front of him.

Sliding past, Harry walked into the small dead end.

Tonks immediately tapped the correct stones and Harry was privileged to see the alley for the first time during the winter holidays.

The heavy snow that had only been getting thicker and fluffier fell heavily from the sky. The streets were covered in the white fluff. The normally crowded alley was just as crowded as ever as witches and wizards went from one store to another trying to rush in as much Christmas shopping as possible.

Children clad in the fluffiest and most appallingly embarrassing parkas, and other winter apparel, flounced about joyously in the snow; happily trudging through the soft powder.

The store fronts themselves were as festively decorated, with fairy lights or garlands, spewing forth cheery seasonal music.

Harry couldn't help but smile to himself as he watched the parade of shoppers going about their business. The Dursley's had never taken him out to go Christmas shopping, and he often spent his time holed up in Mrs. Fig's house helping her wrangle her cats into bows and other odd decorations.

"Do you have enough money or will we be stopping off at Gringotts as well." Dumbledore asked pleasantly as he watched Harry watch the masses.

Patting his pocket Harry noted the fairly full sack of coins, having not visited a wizarding establishment in forever; he had plenty of gold left to spend.

"I should be fine, do you need to go?" Harry asked back.

Dumbledore shook his head pleasantly while reaching into... of all places, his beard.

He pulled out a violently purple sack which jangled happily.

"I believe I should be fine." He proceeded to place the bag back into his beard, confounding Harry with the physics and oddness of such an act.

Harry was still debating on commenting, when he felt the back of his head get thudded by cold powdery balls of snow.

Straitening his glasses as they had slid to the tip of his nose upon impact he quickly turned around and spotted his attackers.

"You don't write..."

"...you don't call."

"A bloke might start to think you didn't care." A familiar set of red heads said while preparing another set of snow balls.

Lobbing another ball, Fred or George, proceeded to huff indignantly.

"It's like he forgot about us already...."

Ducking the ball... "Oy, watch it." Harry cried indignantly.

"Where's the love Harry..." George or Fred asked in sadness.

Tossing another ball in sync Fred and George each lobbed a ball at the ducking teen... It appeared as though his minders would be of no

help in this attack as he heard clear chuckling from the headmaster and Tonks seemed to be egging the pair on with tips.

Having enough of that, Harry took a hold of his wand and waved it in the twin's general direction.

Each immediately raised shields in preparation for spell fire. Neither however were prepared for Harry to banish the snow off the roof tops at them.

Harry particularly enjoyed the wide eyed stare of each twin as they took in their fate.

The last thing Harry saw from the two before they were buried under the pile of snow was one twin's respectful nod and the others salute to Harry before they vanished under the white.

... ..

"I don't see why you two didn't just apparate away..." Harry asked as he handed each of the twins a towel.

"No can do Old Chap, the suppressor field from them muggle has leaked off into the alley some how. It makes apparition right tricky in some areas... though we can still do magic for some reason?"

"Tom's been making a fortune in customers since he has one of the few places with an open floo access..." the other twin said in envy.

"We're on the waiting list to get one installed but it takes forever for the people at the ministry to get one set up, and then we have to put out the word as well..." the other said with a pout as Angelina tsked at him disapprovingly while checking a thermometer.

After the three had unburied the two mischief makers, the group had decided to make their way to the twin's store.

It was a first for Harry, having never visited the twin's creation.

Harry honestly didn't expect what he saw.

He had expected some outlandishly colourful, bordering on debaucherous building that paid testament to the twins unique... personalities. What he found however was anything but.

Upon spotting the sign written in a loopy cursive, and the opulently decorated window, with shiny trimmings and other little accoutrements to add to the oddly classy appeal; Harry was ready to tell the twins he was lost.

Upon entering the building he was greeted by the oddest display of class he had ever seen.

Butlers with serving trays were waiting by the door, and following customers along politely.

“What’s this...?” A child asked innocently. Her pigtails bouncing around her head while she observed a bin full of a familiar candy.

“Ah an excellent choice madam. This is a Weasley wheeze classic. The nosebleed nougat...” The man expunged in a haughty attitude.

He proceeded to describe to the child the effects of the candy, possible uses, and how the nougat flavour accentuated the chocolaty texture of the candy.

The entire store was like a high class restaurant from some Saturday morning cartoon, complete with a violinist who played wizarding rock music, with a man who stood beside him who every now and then lightly tapped a miniature gong during the songs.

Harry had no words to describe how bizarre the entire scene was to his eyes. A snooty looking man who had a well trimmed mustache was staring at them haughtily while looking pointedly at the wet footprints they had tracked into the snow.

The twin who Harry had reasoned to be Fred had explained that they couldn’t decide on a theme for the store so every month they made a new one. Last month it was Dark arts with the store attendants dressed as ghouls and vampires, the month before that it was knights

of the round table, where the now butlers would act like Sir Cadogan and challenge each other to joust and quests to prove their bravery to the customers.

George led the two through a door to the back where Harry had quidditch flashbacks as he saw Angelina Johnson, Lee Jordan, and Alicia Spinnet sitting at a table with papers, products, and other paraphernalia that boggled the mind.

Angelina had quickly latched on to Fred and scolded him for playing in the snow again...

"If you would like Mr. Weasley, I can have some one from the Order come by tomorrow to set up a floo Access, my only condition is that you allow it to be used as an emergency exit and entrance for the order and other bystanders should the need arise." Dumbledore offered.

"Deal!" The two said immediately.

"Excellent..." Dumbledore agreed genially as he shook hands with each.

"I must also compliment you on such a fine shop; I passed by more than one item I am afraid I will have to ban from Hogwarts." Dumbledore remarked with an impressed tone.

The twins seemed to puff up in pride at that. Harry couldn't help but snort as the twins still clad in towels to dry off from the snow, gave the man an in depth tour of the store pointing out other items he might consider banning.

... ..

After bidding the twins fare well and escaping with complimentary pranks and a set of canary creams for Neville, Simply because Harry thought he would see the humour in getting the candy; they proceeded to shop. Harry felt odd leading an Auror and military leader around while he went in search of gifts.

The public at large never noticed Dumbledore unless he greeted them first, shocking them as they suddenly noticed the man who would smile at them genially unfazed by their ignorance of his presence...

In the end Harry had bought a gift for Ron, the Weasley family as a whole, Tonks (which took some doing considering she looked over his shoulders constantly), a book on knitting your own socks for Dumbledore, which Harry suspected the man had seen, as he had a bright cheery smile the rest of the day, and Remus.

He had gotten the marauder a book entitled "So you've fallen for a muggle"; feeling a joke gift, being the only thing appropriate to give the man.

The only gift he had left to get was for Luna.

"So what's next...?" Tonks asked pleasantly as she took a sip from a thermos full of hot coco that Florens Fortescues had been selling.

"I just have the one gift left..." Harry said distractedly as he walked dazedly through the alley trying to find a store that might have something appropriate.

"Who for...?" Tonks asked curiously as she followed the boy along.

"Luna..." Harry said automatically before he could stop himself. Immediately a chill went down his spine as he realized what a mistake that had been.

"This wouldn't happen to be Luna Lovegood, would it...?" Tonks asked lecherously.

Harry turned his suspicious eyes upon the metamorph already seeing the humour dancing within the women's corneas.

"Maybe..." Harry said unconvincingly.

"The one the prophet had written an article about a few weeks ago..." she coaxed teasingly.

“The Prophet writes a lot of articles...” Harry replied back stiffly.

Tonks wouldn't stop grinning as she followed Harry around. Dumbledore just strolled with an amused smile as he watched the pair.

Harry stopped as a particular item caught his attention.

“Don't you dare...” Tonks warned seriously.

“What...” Harry asked in confusion as he turned away from the window.

“Do you want to scare her away... don't give her that until your married and it's your 40.” Tonks warned.

“Now really, it would be a lovely gift to give to Ms. Lovegood.” Dumbledore defended for Harry as he took in the necklace glittering against the velvet cushions in the window.

“Men...” She huffed tragically while dragging Harry away from the window.

“I was just looking.” Harry defended himself. He wasn't willing to admit that he was seriously considering buying the necklace until the women had scolded him.

“That's enough of that then, no jewellery for girls you've only been dating for....” She stared at the teen curiously.

“2 weeks...” Harry admitted, starting to see how ludicrous the idea sounded.

“My god you're dumb...” Tonks huffed fondly when she had finished dragging Harry away from the shop.

Dumbledore caught up with them and stared at Tonks bemusedly.

“Now really, in my day jewellery was a perfectly appropriate gift to give a young woman...” Dumbledore stated confidently.

“Sir, you do realize you just said ‘in my day’... right?” Tonks asked gently.

Dumbledore turned affronted eyes toward the women. Harry could have sworn he heard the man mumble that ‘in his day, teachers were less mouthy towards their headmasters...’ but he couldn’t be sure.

“Right, well what do you suggest then?” Harry asked the women deciding to break up the strange by play.

“Personal, cheap, significant, and something she’s not expecting.” She stated right away.

“And that would be...?” Harry asked.

“I’m not dating the girl, you are... get hopping. And nothing more than ten galleons!” she warned.

For the next hour Harry was stuck in-between the two adults as they argued the finer points of gift giving. It was very conflicting to have both of them tell him the positive and negative aspects of a gift, often causing Harry to immediately put the item down when one would criticize the appropriateness for a love interest.

Harry hoped the girl would appreciate the amount of time and suffering he had put in to get her a gift. He now wondered whether the Dursley’s had truly done him a favour in not taking him along for their Christmas shopping.

... ..

Tomorrow the Hogwarts express would arrive to take the student’s away for the beginning of their Christmas holidays.

Harry had spent the last few days organizing his gifts and wrapping them accordingly. He had decided to treat himself by skipping his independent study sessions for the day. He was well ahead in terms

of runes, just starting the fifth year material and projects. He was fairly current with his potions as well and he saw no reason why he shouldn't be able to maintain his Exceeds for the subject.

After escaping the shopping trip from hell, he had bid the two professors adieu and bolted for his room. Neither paid him too much mind as they had gotten into an argument about giving scented bath supplies as gifts.

"What could possibly be wrong with giving such a gift...?" Dumbledore had asked unbelievably.

"Oh, it's a wonderful gift... if you want to tell the girl she smells." Tonks said sarcastically.

Harry was currently in his bed with the drapes covering him as he accounted for all his gifts.

A sack full of candies and treats for Ron, as it was the standard gift the pair gave each other every Christmas.

A set of wheezes for Neville, all the ones that he had been pranked with before hand...

Dumbledore's book on knitting socks and a set of knitting needles and yarn...

A new wizarding wireless as the Weasley's old one was losing reception...

A novelty alarm clock for Tonks with an old lady on top who waved her fists about yelling odd phrases to get the sleeper up...

Remus's book on how to date a muggle, with a note warning him not to even bother listening to any of the suggestions within as they bordered on ludicrous. A particular chapter on annunciation came to mind. It had warned the reader to speak slowly and clearly... a sketch of a woman with more hair than head and a vapid smile stared back at Harry as he read the chapter...

Luna's gift sat at the centre. It had taken some doing, and he had to have the shop owner mail it to him with the necessary changes but it was finally ready. Harry wasn't sure how the girl would take his gift, but he hoped it would be positively.

The only other gift left was a tightly wrapped rectangular package to his right.

He had struggled with himself on this gift.

He wasn't even sure whether he should get it or not, simply because he wasn't sure whether it would have been received well by the recipient.

When Harry had been buying his gift for Luna, he had spotted a rack that had proudly displayed a fancy gold printed, leather bound book.

Hogwarts: a History

Limited Edition

Immediately he knew that the book was meant for Hermione, yet with their current relationship, he couldn't imagine giving her a gift.

Seeing as the book was quickly being sold out, Harry, on a whim bought the last and only copy, adding it to his purchase.

He had wrapped the book up in red wrapping paper with a silver bow, but left the card unsigned.

He had half hoped that maybe Ron may have forgotten to go Christmas shopping, and he could pass the gift along as his, but sadly the boy had already bought and wrapped all his presents.

'This is ridiculous...' Harry huffed mentally.

Opening his bedroom curtain he grabbed the present and marched out of the room.

Passing students as he marched grumpily away from Gryffindor tower, towards the home of his only constant companion.

stomping up the spiral stairs toward the owlery, Harry wondered whether he should really be this preoccupied with a girl who had insulted him more than Malfoy this term.

Putting that thought aside as he entered the avian abode, Harry searched the ceiling, glaring warningly at the other owls lest they try and steal from him like the last had.

His eyes finally landed on a flying white form that was streaking majestically towards him from the west.

Hedwig, had always had an odd way of knowing when he wanted her, and she did not disappoint as she landed upon his outstretched arm and hooted at him in greeting.

It was about eight at night, and Hedwig and the other owls had just left for their hunt. Hedwig had a blood stain on her beak which Harry rubbed off gently with a conjured cloth, not as repulsed as he would have been earlier in his life.

“Had a good hunt...” Harry asked the bird while stroking her between the wing joints.

Hedwig cooed proudly while leaning into his touch.

“You up for a little job for me?” Harry asked with a smile.

The owl in answer, raised out her right talon expectantly.

Harry smiled and pulled out the gift.

“This goes to Hermione’s house; you’ve been there before, no need to wait for a reply.” Harry instructed.

Hedwig nodded while nipping his fingers affectionately like she always had.

“Thanks girl, I’ll be with Remus down by Sloan square... you think you’ll have trouble finding me?” he asked.

Hedwig gave him a stare that clearly mocked his intelligence before nipping at his fingers once more and taking flight.

Harry watched as his bird flew away, disappearing into the falling snow to give a gift to a girl who wasn’t really his friend anymore.

Harry turned away and started his trek back to the Gryffindor common room, trying to let his mind wander onto other subjects but all he could think about was the special edition book he had bought for his once friend.

They had been close once, frightfully so. Every now and then in the past, he had even entertained the thought that maybe something might have happened between the two, but things had changed so much since they had first met.

That caring streak the girl had had suddenly started to become mothering, and soon after smothering. The intelligence he had once admired had started to leave Harry feeling like his personal life had been violated. His being judged and condemned... his soul inadequate.

Every time the girl stared at him in accusation or suspicion, Harry couldn’t help but wonder if she had ever truly trusted him. Whether all those adventures that had been dangerous and life altering had shown the girl how truly horrendous it was to be a friend to Harry Potter.

He had often thought of doing the noble thing and pushing his friends away, simply because his life was too dangerous, but he had always shoved that thought aside, as being ludicrous and premature. But when the opportunity had come he had done it, he had cut the strings and ended a six year friendship.

The gift did not so much feel like indecision on his part, but more like a final goodbye, with it he had packed away all the memories and emotion he had felt for the girl, and shipped them away in a red

wrapping paper, silver bowed book on a place they had once been more than friends, a place where they had something unique... something that was no more.

... ..

The horn to the train had blown wildly, announcing the lurch that was to come as the train moved off towards London. Students excitedly strolled the corridors, visiting friends and exchanging gifts and cards.

As a treat to the prefects Professor Sprout, Flitwick, and Tonks strolled the cars for them; often smiling cheerily and spreading the festive cheer.

Harry knew it was actually for the protection of the student's to have competent teachers aboard, and auror around. Tonks may have been fun loving and whimsical, but she certainly knew what she was doing. She spent the first few classes teaching students different methods to go unseen from disillusionments to glamour's. Covering ways to uncover the unseen as well... the last few classes though had been on shielding, and Harry had already learned four separate methods to protect himself. The last class had been more fun as the women went through some healing spells. At the end of the day he had learned enough to be able to heal small cuts, disinfect wounds, partially mend broken bones, lessen bruises, and diagnose injury. Tonks had commended him on his skill and suggested he look into becoming a field medic. Something that Harry gave a brief moment of thought to.

Harry wandered the corridors dragging his trunk behind him as he tried to find an empty corridor. Ron had warned him that Mrs. Weasley had helped move Remus in when she got off work and had taken to almost daily visits to ensure Harry had a good first Christmas with the man.

More than likely the Weasley's would be visiting so he would see those friends over the holidays.

Neville's gran had picked him up before the train had arrived, using the floo pads. The device that Remus had used a few months was a public transportation system that had stops all over the isle but was in

accessible from private fire places. Harry had handed the boy his gift before he vanished in a puff of green vapour.

Tonks would be spending time with her own family for the holidays so Harry had planned of giving the metamorph her gift early. Though she hinted at stopping by for Christmas Eve.

Walking by corridors he was currently in search of a specific person to spend the rest of his train trip with.

Ron understood that it would be uncomfortable at the moment for he and Hermione to spend time in a cramped space together; he understood Harry's excuse that he wanted to spend time with the loveable Ravenclaw and told him he would catch up with him later.

Harry's eyes focused on a blonde flash and quickly walked backwards and looked into the compartment he had just passed by.

Smiling to himself he slid the door open and stuck his head inside.

"Mind if I join you?" he asked rhetorically.

Luna turned and smiled happily as she spotted the tussle haired lad.

"Harry..." She said out loud with a bright smile.

"Sorry about earlier, I got lost in the crowds." He apologized as he entered the cabin. They had walked together to the train but got separated when Harry had excused himself to wish Neville a merry Christmas.

Luna smiled and patted a seat next to her.

"Do you know what you and your dad are going to do for the holidays...?" Harry asked as he took a seat by the girl.

"Not sure, I think we'll probably be spending the holidays at home this year, we didn't make any real plans..." Luna said absentmindedly while leaning into his shoulders while staring out the window.

Harry put his arm around the girl to support her while he too looked outside.

It was still snowing. There was talk about there being a snow storm this Christmas. Not much had accumulated though, as during brief lulls in the flurries much had melted or was shovelled aside, but there was always another bout of snow around the corner waiting to take the place of its departed brethren.

“Well, I know the Weasley’s are coming over for Christmas Eve, and I think Tonks as well, I don’t think Remus would mind if you and your dad came as well...” Harry invited.

“Really, I thought that maybe you might have wanted to spend some time with Remus alone, considering it being your first Christmas and all...” she asked curiously.

“Nah... I think it’s a conspiracy for me to always have a red head around for the holidays, haven’t had a Christmas with out Ron about. “Harry said jokingly as he thought back to his previous Christmas’s.

“I’ll ask daddy, I know he want’s to meat with you again...” Luna said enthusiastically.

Suddenly warning bells started to flare within Harry’s mind.

“Does your dad know about... us?” Harry asked in slight trepidation.

Luna turned her head to stare at Harry amusedly.

“Of course silly...” She admonished.

Suddenly Harry hoped Mr. Lovegood would decline the invitation... He definitely wanted to stay as far away from the man while he had interests in his daughter.

... ..

Arriving at platform nine and three quarters, Harry and Luna exited hand in hand. Upon noticing the familiar father walking towards them Harry quickly let go and took a step away and behind the girl.

Luna looked at him in amusement as she reattached their hands and dragged the reluctant boy forwards.

Harry suddenly realized just how much taller the man was than him. It may have been Harry's imagination but the man seemed much more sinister than ever before.

"Daddy!" Luna cried happily while letting go of Harry and giving the man a warm hug.

"Hello Pumpkin, I've missed you." The man said warmly while returning the girls hug.

Harry fidgeted uncomfortably; not sure whether he should say or do something.

Quickly letting go, Luna walked back and dragged Harry forward.

"Daddy, you remember Harry." Luna introduced.

Harry awkwardly put his hand out...

"Hello Sir..." Harry greeted uncomfortably.

The man eyed him for a moment his smile slipping slightly before reaffirming itself on the man's face.

"Why hello Mr. Potter..." He reached out and took Harry's hand, squeezing it a little firmer than Harry thought necessary.

"Luna's been telling me the most interesting things..." He said pleasantly.

Harry panicked for a moment wondering what the girl had been telling the man, they had not even kissed so he did not think he could be in trouble, but the panic was there.

Luna noticing Harry's slight panic turned stern eyes toward her farther for a moment.

The man innocently stared at her daughter.

Harry's eyes tracked over the man's shoulder and spotted the most welcome sight he had ever seen.

"Remus! Remus over here...!" Harry cried out, spotting the man walk over happily.

"Harry, my you've grown..." Remus said while giving Harry a half hug.

"Hello Professor Lupin..." Luna Said shyly upon spotting the man. Harry wasn't entirely sure why she was being shy but thought it might have been for the same reasons why he was nervous.

Turning around to stare at the girl Remus brightly replied.

"Ms. Lovegood, I have been looking forward to seeing you again..." Remus said a little too brightly for Harry's sake.

Luna pinked a little, but smiled.

Grabbing a hold of her father's hand she introduced him.

"Daddy, this is Professor Lupin, from my second year..." she reminded the man.

"Mr. Lupin, I believe we've met. You were two years above me in Hogwarts at the time. A Gryffindor correct?" the man asked with a more genuine smile as he took his hand.

"Ahh yes, I do recall meeting a Lovegood back in the day, prefect from Ravenclaw..." he asked in recognition.

"Correct. Luna's talked quite highly of you, it's a shame that you left teaching, you were a welcome change from that Lockhart fellow." The man smiled sardonically.

Remus laughed to himself amusedly, "Well after following Gilderoy, if rumour is true, wouldn't have been too difficult." The man said humbly.

"Luna was an excellent student, quite creative with the wand if I remember... a pleasure to teach." The man praised.

Luna pinked a tad more, and her farther pulled her close proudly.

"Listen, Barry was it...?" Remus asked. The man smiled, pleased that he had been remembered.

"A couple of friends and family are coming over for the holidays, I'd be delighted if you and Luna would join us... give us some time to plot ways to make Harry uncomfortable, eh..." Remus coaxed pleasantly.

Harry turned betrayed eyes toward his guardian, ignoring the chuckles Luna's farther let out.

"I wouldn't want to be a bother..." Barry said with a smile.

"No bother at all, would you mind Harry?" Remus asked.

"Harry actually invited us on the train..." Luna chipped in.

"See, we'd be delighted..." Remus said happily.

"Very well then, we will look forward to it. Do you have floo access?" the man said. He reached into his jacket and pulled out a notepad and quill.

As the two exchanged floo coordinates, Luna and Harry stood aside feeling slightly lost in the conversation.

Deciding on something, Luna reached out and pulled Harry away from the pair unnoticed.

"I wasn't sure whether we were... and I completely understand if you didn't... but, here." Luna said awkwardly while pulling out a small

rectangular box. It was wrapped in simple white wrapping paper with a card tucked in under the red bow.

Harry took the gift and smiled.

Sticking out his hand with his finger up in a gesture indicating he wanted her to wait. Harry dug into his trunk and pulled out a rectangular box for her.

Luna smiled brightly.

“Thank you Harry...” She said gratefully while taking the gift.

“Thank you Luna...” Harry replied back while holding his gift up significantly.

Luna put her arms around him and hugged him gently.

“I’ll see you in about a week then I guess...” Harry asked.

“I’ll look forward to it...” Luna said in a half whisper.

Hearing a cough, Harry whipped his head around and spotted the two adults staring at him. One with a blank face, and the other in amusement.

Quickly letting go, Harry stood beside the girl who just now spotted the pair and paused before standing straight backed with a defiant tilt to her head as she stared at her farther.

Surprisingly the man smiled widely at that and walked forward while enveloping his daughter in a hug. He stuck his hand out toward Harry...

“I look forward to seeing you again Mr. Potter.” The man said genuinely.

“Me too sir.” Harry said, taking the mans hand and returning a shake.

“Come on Pumpkin, I made a pie!” The man said while leading the pair away.

Harry was amused to note that he sensed dread coming from the girl at the remark about baked goods.

Remus walked up beside Harry and looked on as the Lovegoods disappeared into the crowd.

“So... she seems nice.” Remus teased innocently.

Harry Groaned...

... ..

After much teasing on the part of the last Marauder as he got his revenge upon Harry, the pair finally arrived at their place.

Harry had to admit, it was quite lovely during the winter.

The snow covered tree's the park opposite filled with snowmen and children playing happily. Christmas lights decorated the building and he could see that their own flat had a wreath and a multicoloured lighting around the living room window.

Remus smiled and unlocked the front door.

Pausing for a second, Remus turned around and stared at the teen in apology.

“I’m sorry Harry, I almost forgot...” Digging into his pockets, Remus pulled out a red, plastic tag keychain, that connected to a wired ring holding a bronze square key.

Taking the key's happily and feeling the weight in his hands Harry put them into his pockets with a warm feeling emanating within his chest.

Remus smiled and pushed the door open.

Harry couldn't help but smile as he walked inside. Garlands and bobbles decorated the banister and a mat with another set of shoes sat to the left. A coat rack stood beside it where Harry hung his winter coat the Weasley's had given him.

The living room had a set of couches and a coffee table, to one side, by the window, a fireplace sat adjacent to the far wall, and a simple desk with a moderately sized Television sat in one corner, while an undecorated tree sat beside a pair of red and white stockings by the fireplace.

Some boxes littered the floor with chords of tangled Christmas lights, and boxes of freshly bought ornaments sat to one side.

"I thought that you could help me set up the tree." Remus informed Harry as he watched him take it all in.

Harry didn't let on to how much it all meant to him, turning around and smiling at the man teasingly.

"You just want me to untangle the lights..."

"You... Go put your things away smart Alec." Remus ordered mock sternly as he tussled Harry's hair.

It was going to be an interesting few weeks... more so than anyone would ever know.

AN: Alright, I've really moved the timeline along in this chapter. Everything seems fairly straight forward to me, so I don't think there needs to be much explanation....

Tonks is how I pictured her, a funloving goofy gal who likes to cause a scene every now and then; once she loosened up around Dumbledore, she was able to argue with the man in a friendly manner.

I wanted to poke fun at all the fics where Harry goes on a shopping spree and buys his girlfriend a ton of jewellery and junk just because he can. You know the fics, where Harry makes grand gestures, long speeches and marries the girl within the first few days. Harry's a kid who is in his first relationship and has access to a ridiculous amount of

money; he needs those limits Tonks set for him to set some perspective, as I personally don't see giving jewellery to a girl you had just started dating being a very good idea.

The scented soaps thing was just something I remember arguing with one of my friend about in high school, I always thought giving away that stuff just felt like you were calling the girl smelly... it could just be me.

This chapter was surprisingly hard to write; quite a few rewrites took place before I was somewhat satisfied with this version.

Anyway, the chapter I've wanted to write forever... that's the next one.

Many things will start to take shape; some answers about the secrets I have kept will have to be answered soon... Action Mayhem... Let's see if I can do my vision justice.

Till next time.

Quazi

Chapter 22 – I'm so going to Hell (Part I)

All through out England odd occurrences had been taking place.

Mysterious murders, Suicides with people hanging themselves from vaulted ceilings within grand ballroom sized area's, without ladders or other implements to account for the occurrence.

People thrown from their apartment windows with such force that they landed 2 or three blocks away, instantly dead upon impact.

Murdered victims with the most horrendous smiles upon their faces as they stared blankly at their fireplaces which continued to burn days after the victim had died within their locked rooms.

Of smaller note, were the mysterious gatherings of wildlife within the urban jungle.

Cats, Rats, Dogs, Gazelle, and snakes converged together without attacking one another.

One particular Government research facility which dealt with innovative new techniques for water purification had to forcibly remove a snake after it mysteriously entered the surprisingly high security facility through means unknown.

These events had been happening for two or three months now, with a frequentness that was suspicious to say the least. Then, it stopped.

The murders died down, the culprit believed to be in hiding.

The animals vanished supposedly killed in traffic accidents or wandered back into the wildlife and away from the city.

Research facilities around the country, that all seemed to be doing the same experiment involving radio waves and mysterious barrels of classified liquids went on unimpeded by having to extricate Reptiles from their ground breaking labs.

All this went unnoticed by the population in general, as they were unrelated occurrences and only some would be reported by the papers. The public at large was reeling more from the love affair a certain actress was having between another actor, condemning the mans marriage to shambles.

In one particular home, a boy who knew none of this, as he had not even glanced at a news paper in months, had other problems to deal with.

“Shh, its okay, you’ll be fine...” Harry coaxed soothingly.

Wails of misery emanated out of the mouth of a little girl who had just banged her knee while running around the coffee table.

“Remus?!” Harry cried desperately as he lifted the girl up and carried her over to the kitchen.

“In a minute Harry...” Remus said distractedly. Harry smelled a slight burning smell emanate from the kitchen the man was in.

“Remus, I can cook if you want, it’s not a problem...” Harry offered, wanting someone else to take the child from his arms as he was not very used to upset children.

Laura, Remus's neighbour, the one who had worked as a waitress at the charming bistro a few blocks away, had stopped by to welcome Harry to the neighbourhood. She and Remus had planned to cook dinner together for Harry; that is until they had realized they were out of tomatoes.

Remus in a moment of idiocy, decided to lie and say that he could boil the spaghetti if she wanted to go and pick some tomatoes up. Harry who had been watching cartoons with the woman’s daughter had unwittingly doomed himself when he agreed to play tag with the girl.

The moment Laura had left, all hell broke loose.

“It’s okay Harry; I’m fine don’t you worry.” Remus yelled back as the smell of smoke got stronger. Suddenly the fire alarm started to beep incessantly. The toddler in Harry’s arm seemed to take that as a challenge as she yelled louder.

Harry rubbing the girls back soothingly walked into the kitchen and stared in horror.

Smoke was rising from a pot that should have been filled with water and pasta. The oven as well for some reason.

Remus who was clad in a soot covered apron was going back and forth between the sink trying to fill the pot with more water from a moderately sized drinking cup. In a moment of inspiration the man grabbed the handle of the hose attachment to the sink and aimed it at the pot.

Pulling the trigger dramatically in a pose like a fireman preparing himself as he aimed his own hose at a burning building... Remus let forth the jet of water.

The water shot forth, and arched downwards in an unimpressive display of pressure as it spilled onto the floor half the distance away. The floor was now covered in water and the girl had stopped crying in his arms, distracted by the strange display of her neighbour.

Remus's head quickly swilled and spotted Harry with the girl staring at him in horror. An embarrassed blush seemed to rise in his cheeks.

“It’s not as bad as it looks...” He defended.

Deciding to save his new home from being burned to the ground by the man, Harry walked forward, side stepping the growing puddle, and took hold of the hose extension from the mans grasp. Putting it aside, Harry walked back and held out the little girl.

“You take her, and keep her from running into more tables...”Harry instructed.

“But...” Remus defended as he took the child automatically.

"I'll see about fixing this... now out." Harry said sternly.

He thought he might have reminded the man of Mrs. Weasley as he immediately followed orders.

As the door closed Harry took in the sight of the kitchen.

Quickly turning the sink off and wandlessly banishing the water and burnt contents Harry peeked into the oven.

A crisp black loaf which smelled a little of garlic remained on the rack. Taking that and seeing it was unsalvageable Harry discarded it while refilling the pot with water, and grabbing another packet of spaghetti while wondering to himself how the man had survived all these years.

Using his magic once more, Harry boiled the water quickly and set the pasta in.

Still smelling the smell of smoke in the air, Harry opened the window and set the fan above the stove to clear the air of all evidence.

Checking the kitchen for anything else to do, he took out a mop and wiped up the excess moisture from the floor.

Hearing a doorbell Harry Quickly rushed out and handed the man the mop back.

"In the kitchen..." he ordered the man who took the mop dumbly while Emmy stared at him oddly.

Remus followed orders and pushed the door open only to stare in surprise... "How did you...?"

He was cut off as Harry walked toward the front door and opened it to reveal Laura holding a bag of tomatoes proudly.

"I'm glad to see the house is still here..." She remarked cheerily.

"Last time Remus burnt the soup..." She joked.

Harry wished he had known that earlier. He watched as the women walked into the kitchen and congratulated him for boiling noodles.

Emmy just continued to stare confusedly at Harry and Remus, the pain in her knee no longer bothering her as she took in the strange two men.

... ..

Dinner was an amusing affair as the four sat to eat. Remus kept sending Harry confused looks while Laura questioned him on his schooling.

Emmy would giggle every now and then as if she had a secret she was barely able to keep hidden. Harry had taken the girl aside and asked her to keep Remus's little kitchen mishap a secret, the girl had loved that idea but Harry's faith in her secrecy keeping skills were a tad misplaced considering her age.

Laura was perplexed as the girl winked repeatedly back and forth between Harry and Remus, as if she was trying to be sly. The boys themselves fidgeted in their seat each time.

When it was time to say goodbye Remus and Harry saw the two out the door and watched them walk two doors away into their own complex.

Once they were out of sight, Remus closed the door and turned curious eyes toward Harry.

"How did you clean up the kitchen so fast?" he asked perplexed.

"Honestly Remus, were wizards..." Harry teased.

"You used magic?" he asked confused.

"Well of course..." Harry said while walking toward the couch and plopping down tiredly.

Remus stared at Harry confusedly. Reaching into his pockets he pulled out his wand and gave it an experimental shake.

“Harry, You can’t do magic here?” Remus said in confusion.

“No don’t worry about it. Dumbledore gave me a waiver last summer. The ministry won’t care.” Harry said, misinterpreting the mans statement.

“No Harry, I mean you can’t do Magic here...” Remus said significantly.

He waved his wand about and said Lumos confidently. Nothing happened.

Harry stared confusedly at the man for a moment before he realized what he had done.

He had performed magic...

He had performed Wandless Magic...

He had performed wandless Magic in an area where the muggles were supposedly blocking all magic...

‘Whoops.’

“Harry, what’s going on?” Remus said in confusion as he took a seat opposite the teen. He didn’t ask in accusation but general bafflement.

Deciding that he might as well tell the man, considering they would be living together... Harry thought on what to say.

“Sit down Remus... there’s things I have to tell you.” Harry coaxed.

Remus looked on worriedly as he took a seat on the coffee table directly in front of Harry.

“Is everything alright Harry...?” He asked in concern.

"Everything's fine Remus... it's just, I've been going through some changes over the last few months." Harry said awkwardly.

"Changes?" Remus asked curiously.

"Yea... um you remember a few months ago when Voldemort did that ritual. Way back when I was living with the Dursley's?" Harry asked uncomfortably. His hands fidgeted unsurely.

"I do..." Remus stated.

"Well, when that happened, the connection I have with Voldemort... the ritual... I..." Harry stumbled, unsure how to go about explaining things.

Harry felt a warm hand being placed upon his shoulder and looked into the eyes of his guardian.

"It's alright Harry..." the man said calmly. His mellow tones soothing Harry's unease.

Nodding at the man, Harry decided that a practical demonstration would be best.

Harry raised his hands in a sweeping motion around his head. Immediately the drapes behind him closed, startling the wizard in front of him.

"Voldemort's Ritual affected me too..." Harry said blankly.

He stood up and walked around the man who stared at him in wonder.

Within his palms he called forth a Lumos that grew and shrunk as Harry opened and closed his hands.

"One of the side effects was that I can do magic..." Harry said, while closing his right fist, extinguishing the light, and put his left arm out summoning a throw pillow.

“... Without a wand.” He finished as the pillow flew into his hand, making a fluffy puff noise.

Remus stared at the teen in surprise. With a tinge of awe...

“One of the side effects...?” Remus finally said catching on to Harry’s slip.

Cursing himself for revealing too much, Harry considered lying and saying that it was just a slip of the tongue, or maybe going into detail about some of the more minor effects like his off and on mind reading skill... But he just couldn’t do it.

A reckless voice inside told him to just let it all out, to tell the man everything he had been hiding. Inside somewhere he dreaded losing the man to secrets like he had Hermione.

“Umm... there are some other not so important things, but there is this one thing that’s kind of recent...” Harry said unsurely.

Remus stared at the teen curiously.

“Ah, help me move the table...” Harry asked. Remus immediately complied, standing up and pulling the table into the entranceway.

Having no other reason to stall, Harry went for it.

Using the worry and agitation, revealing all his secrets to the man had been creating; Harry shot them at his core.

Each sensation from the strengthening of his body, to the sensations as his wings growing out from his back was like a Gavel being banged on a desk. Further condemning him...

Harry stared down at the floor for a moment refusing to meet the stare of the man in front of him.

Silence reigned for what felt like an eternity before Harry felt a hands being placed upon his shoulders.

“Harry...” Remus voice asked emotionlessly.

Harry continued to stare down at the floor unwilling to look into the eyes of the only family he could claim to have. He feared seeing the revulsion that he had so often seen in the Dursley’s eyes.

“Harry, look at me...” Remus’s voice commanded more gently.

Taking a moment Harry prepared himself, before tilting his head up to stare into the eyes of the last marauder.

“Thank you for telling me...” he said in appreciation, somehow Harry knew the man was touched by the trust Harry had placed in him by such an act.

Harry couldn’t help but smile in relief.

“Did it hurt, growing the wings?” he asked in concern.

“No, they itch a lot but other than that...” Harry said in relief as he reached behind his back and tried to scratch a spot that had been bugging him forever.

Harry wasn’t sure why the man laughed but he was glad all the same. It meant that everything was going to be alright... that was a welcome change for the teen.

... ..

Harry and Remus had an in-depth conversation the rest of the night, with a floo call to Dumbledore to inform him of the only other person to know Harry’s secret.

Dumbledore seemed surprised but thrilled at the revelation; a genuine twinkle beamed through the man’s aged expressive eyes.

Dumbledore proceeded to visit and update Remus on Harry’s sessions and training. Of particular interest was Harry’s wand control during transformation.

Harry had during the last practice session gained some slight control over his wand. The effects were astounding to say the least. Spells were enhanced to limits that the elderly wizard had not been aware were possible.

Slips in control revealed how much power Harry could channel into a spell. What was truly intriguing to Harry though was the instinctive nature of the wand. It reacted based on his own thoughts and he barely had to realize consciously what he wanted before the magic had done it for him. He had a long way to go, and his control was nowhere near perfect or adequate, but it was a step in the right direction in Harry's opinion.

Remus had a deer in headlights look most of the night.

It was late into the night until Remus suggested they hit the hay, Dumbledore had long ago bid them farewell.

That night's sleep in his own bed, after gaining another confidant was one of the best Harry had ever had. The winter holidays were starting to look up in Harry's opinion.

... ..

Remus had sorrowfully confided in the teen that he had to go to the citadel to finish off some paperwork; he asked that should Harry need to leave, to leave a note and preferably with some way to contact him should the man need to.

It was a bit awkward on Harry's part, as he usually did not have someone to care enough to ask such a thing, but didn't think it unreasonable.

Remus also informed Harry that his body guard would arrive within the hour.

Harry felt it more of a babysitter but didn't voice the concern.

He didn't mind so much though when the man that had come to protect him turned out to be his mute acquaintance from the citadel.

It proved to be an interesting day in the end.

... ..

Emmy was staring with strained eyes at man in front of him. The man's expression did not flinch in the face of the little girl.

Harry watched the two in amusement.

Emmy had taken to visiting Remus and Harry often, Harry didn't mind so much when she wasn't wailing in pain. Once she had gotten used to Harry she was actually quite nice to have around; terribly adorable as she spoke knowledgably about her activities in school and other such things.

Laura had taken advantage of Harry's natural baby sitting skills to spend more time with Remus. Harry almost wanted to charge the women a fee for his services if he didn't enjoy watching Remus fumble over the women as much as he did.

It was comedic at best as the women and man would try to flirt with one another.

Emmy had taken a surprising interest in Bob, and made it her mission in life to derive a reaction out of the man. Today it was a staring contest, which Emmy was losing.

Harry could have sworn the man felt slightly smug as the child blinked in defeat.

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BUZZZ

"I'll get it..." Harry answered immediately.

Walking down the stairs quickly Harry made his way to the door. Checking the peep hole he was surprised to see the flaming red hair of a Weasley, even if only by marriage.

Opening the door, Harry smiled in surprise.

“Mrs. Weasley, Hi...” Harry said in greeting as he came face to face with the women who meant more to him than she realized.

“Harry Dear...” she cheered with a bright smile. A dish with aluminium foil was in her hands, a burgundy winter coat covered her form, as she stood on the terrace.

“Here let me take that, come in...” Harry welcomed as he took the surprisingly heavy dish from the women.

Shutting the door, Harry heard the familiar soft footsteps of Remus making their way down.

“Was that the door?” the man asked as his feet made an appearance at the top of the stairs.

Immediately spotting Mrs. Weasley, Remus stared in pleasant surprise.

“Molly, hello. This is a pleasant surprise.” Remus said with a smile as he strolled down the stairs to greet the women.

“Hello Remus, how have you been...” the women asked while eyeing the clean entryway and freshly dusted living room in approval. If anything the man was neat, and Harry after years of living with his Aunt Petunia had no qualms with that... though Harry’s room may have been a little more lax in that regard.

Remus went forward with an arm extended but the women pulled him into a warm hug which he returned and then took her coat.

Turning back and spotting the dish still in Harry’s hands, Mrs. Weasley started in askance.

“Oh I’m sorry dear, here let me take that... I made Sheppard’s pie, I thought I’d bring some by.” She said in explanation as she automatically found her way to the kitchen.

Remus had shared tales of the women's exploits as he tried moved into the building, She spent much time instructing the man on what a proper icebox contained for growing boys and other such things. Remus shared an amused look with Harry before following in the women's footsteps.

The two entered the kitchen and found the women piercing holes in the foil and letting it sit on a wooden stand.

She then proceeded to stare at a luke warm pot of tea on the stove.

Harry was actually surprised she had not visited sooner, but thought that she was probably giving him and Remus their time to get adjusted to one another. Mrs. Weasley had always taken a surrogate mother role in his life; being there for him in times when he least suspected he needed her.

As Harry watched the women wash out the pot and pour in some more water, Remus took on a chastising tone.

"Molly, no, you are our guest, let me. Just relax." He coaxed taking the pot away from her and leading her to a seat. She protested but was over ruled as Harry went to get cups.

"Oh, alright..." She said in defeat. Turning around she stared at Harry.

"Come here Harry; let me get a good look at you." She ordered affectionately.

Stepping forward with three cups in hand Harry let the women eye him critically.

"You've grown so much, sit with me, and tell me how the year has been." She instructed.

Harry smiled as Remus's tea pot started to whistle.

"Oh it was fine Mrs. Weasley, and yours?" Harry asked.

"He's a secretive type this one, I've asked him half a dozen times and all he ever says is fine..." Remus chipped in sarcastically as he brought the tea pot over.

Mrs. Weasley nodded to herself with an amused smile as Harry stared at Remus in reprimand.

"That he is... I've been well dear, with Arthur's new job and going back to work, I've been keeping myself busy." Mrs. Weasley answered.

"New job...?" Harry asked curiously.

"Oh, didn't Ron tell you. Seeing as all the hubbub with the muggles that has been going on lately, Arthur's was a natural candidate for a liaison, with Madame Bones in charge, and Professor Dumbledore taking up the slack, Arthur's finally getting recognition for his talents and skills." Mrs Weasley boasted proudly.

"That's great Molly, Pass along my congratulations to Arthur, would you." Remus asked brightly.

Harry nodded seconding that notion but was caught up in another part of the women's answer.

"Sorry, what was that about Madame Bones..." A faint memory of a monocled women at his hearing the year previous flashed across his mind.

"Amelia Bones..." Mrs. Weasley asked in confusion.

"Didn't you hear Harry, She's the new temporary minister for the rest of Fudges term..." Remus explained.

"Really? When did this happen?" Harry asked in surprise.

"Quite a while ago dear, it's important to stay current on such things." Mrs. Weasley advised.

“Yeah, I just haven’t been reading the paper for a while.” Harry explained. He hadn’t remembered the last time he had read the prophet.

“Speaking of Newspapers, I have heard that the Lovegoods were coming visiting as well for Christmas eve.” She said off handily while keeping an eye on Harry.

“Harry, would you like to field this one...” Remus asked innocently.

Harry scowled at the man, but turned to Mrs. Weasley and confirmed their invitation.

“That’s wonderful dear; Luna is such a sweet dear.” Mrs Weasley praised.

Harry didn’t know why he blushed at that.

“Ronald’s also been telling me that the two of you have been quite close this year...” She asked dancing around the topic.

Deciding to just get it over with... “The prophet was telling the truth this time, even if it was a little premature when they printed it.”

“That’s wonderful dear, I didn’t want to pry, but I wanted to confirm it with you this time, you understand...” she answered. Memories of tiny Easter eggs and talk of scarlet women came to mind.

Suddenly the room went dark. The microwave and stove clock turned off and the room was bathed in the semi darkness.

“What just happened?” Molly asked in worry.

Remus who had gotten up, flipped the light switch and picked up the phone; frowned.

“It must be a power out... it happens from time to time. I suspect it’s because of the weather. It’ll be fixed soon.” Remus explained to the women.

“Harry, will you get the candles and turn on the radio.” Remus instructed while he went to the fireplace.

“Sure...” noticing Mrs. Weasley’s uncertain appearance, Harry asked.

“Mrs. Weasley, can you check in the cabinet above the stove. I think there are some matches there.”

Harry thought the women needed something to do, since she was still in an unknown situation to her, having never lived through a power out before. Harry walked carefully up the stairs. It was late into the afternoon and as it was still snowing heavily, it was practically night time in terms of light.

Harry made his way up the stairs to a small cupboard by the bathroom where Remus kept the towels and linens. Ruffling through it Harry found a bundle of candles and batteries. The man liked to be prepared; Harry had to give him that.

A first aid kit with what look like bottles of bruise balm and other useful tidbits laying about.

Taking the candles and the portable radio, Harry filled it with batteries.

Looking around, and seeing no one, Harry took a candle out and stared at the wick.

Harry was immensely pleased when he set the wick on fire.

Taking the candle, and conjuring a simple candle holder Harry set it down on the bathroom counter by the sink. Clearing away anything flammable should the candle somehow fall. Luckily the floor was tile so he wasn’t worried about it catching fire. Lighting another candle with the first and conjuring another base, Harry walked down with the candles and radio in hand.

“You find them Harry?” Remus asked from in front of the fireplace. It was a wood burning one, like the Weasley’s, but without magic it was slightly difficult for the man to set the log on fire.

Mrs. Weasley was giving him advice as he tried to set the logs ablaze.

"I got them..." when, Mrs. Weasley turned at his voice, Harry decided to help out and used his magic to ignite the wood slightly.

Remus turned as he felt the heat radiate off the log and stared at Harry in question.

"Oh, good work Remus." Mrs. Weasley said much more relaxed now that things were starting to get more organized.

Harry handed out the candles and set the radio on the table and turned it on.

Remus set the station and listened as he waited to hear about any power outs.

A knocking at the door interrupted Mrs. Weasley as she was staring at the radio in surprise as the announcer gave current news.

Going to the front door, Harry peaked through the eyehole and opened the door allowing the familiar pair to enter.

"Hello Harry, Sorry to bother you but, I was going to check and see if it was just us that didn't have power." Laura replied in explanation as she held her daughter close to her.

The little girl clinging to her mother tightly.

Noticing Harry's stare, Laura replied in a whisper... "She's not too fond of the dark yet."

"Laura, you loose power too?" Remus asked as he exited the living room, dusting soot off his hands.

"We did, could I trouble you for some candles while I'm here. I'm afraid all I have are birthday cake candles..." the women said in embarrassment.

“Of course, but while you’re here, your welcome to stay. We just got the fire going...” Remus invited

“That would be lovely... What do you think Emmy?” the women asked her daughter.

Emmy nodded silently into the women’s shoulder.

Walking forward at Remus invite, Laura stopped as she spotted Mrs. Weasley who stood by the fire observing the radio with an interest Harry had only ever seen in her husband.

“Oh, hello dear...” Mrs. Weasley said upon spotting the women.

“Hello, I’m sorry I don’t think we’ve met, my name’s Laura.” She said extending her right hand out to greet the women while her other supported her daughter in her arm.

“Molly, it’s a pleasure.” She greeted.

“I’m sorry Remus. I didn’t know you were entertaining guests, we could come back another time.” Laura backtracked, not wanting to intrude.

“Oh nonsense, stay. Molly, is an old friend of Harry and mine. Molly, Laura is our neighbour; she lives a few doors down...” Remus introduced.

“And this little one here,” Remus said while relieving Laura of the burden. The little girl eagerly went into Remus hands and clung to him just as fiercely as her mother.

“... Is Emmy.” He introduced.

The girl shyly peeked at Mrs. Weasley in a manner similar to how she had when first meeting Harry.

Mrs. Weasley automatically fell in love with the child and spent the next few minutes lavishing attention on her.

The group chatted amicably in the living room for a while, Emmy having warmed up to the kind women. Harry had retrieved a set of crayons books and paper for the girl that Remus had in reserve for when she visited.

Remus served out the Sheppard's pie to everyone and thanked Mrs. Weasley for the consideration and excellent dish.

When Emmy had let out a yawn reluctantly, Harry had offered his room once more to house the tyke. Remus had not bought a new bed yet for the guest room.

Harry led the mother and daughter pair up the stairs while out the corner of his eye he spotted Mrs. Weasley heading toward the pot where they kept the floo powder.

Going in first, Harry put away his runes book and upon noticing a globe he had made earlier in the year, tested it out.

The globe had long died out, the globe only lit for as long as the magic lasted in the ball. Normally a wizard would have to charge it with their wand once more for it to light.

Wandlessly infusing the ball with his magic, the globe started to light up and soon the room was bathed in soft rippling light.

Remembering Laura's comment about Emmy's fear of the dark, and not wanting to leave an open flame by a child, Harry thought this would make a much better nightlight. It wasn't too outlandish and Harry could see it being explained away through chemistry or something like that. Strengthening the ball with a charm should it fall Harry let the pair in.

"Oh my..." Laura said in surprise upon seeing the lit room from the globe.

"That's quite lovely, where did you get it...?" she asked curiously.

"It's a science experiment from school..." Harry lied.

Placing the globe in a holder he had made for it earlier, he placed the ball on the shelf in his wall.

“I’ll let you get settled in.” He offered while leaving the pair in his room, turning down thanks from the mother for his thoughtfulness.

Re-entering the living room he watched as Mrs. Weasley quickly get up from the fireplace, presumably having a conversation through the floo.

“Oh Harry, it’s just you.” She said, presumably worried that it was Laura coming down the stairs.

“I should probably leave while I can, I can’t use the floo in front of her.” She explained.

“Of course, thank you for stopping by and dinner. We really appreciate it.” Remus said while giving the women a hug.

“Thank you for having me. It was a pleasure to see you again Harry, I suspect I’ll see you Christmas Eve.” She remarked while giving Harry a warm hug as well.

Remus who had went to fetch her coat and empty dish checked the stairs before giving the all clear.

Nodding to herself, Mrs. Weasley grabbed herself a pinch of floo powder and with a final goodbye, vanished through the moderately large fireplace in a flash of green flame.

The rest of the evening went by nicely, with Harry excusing himself to leave Laura and Remus some time to themselves. It was close to 10 pm before the lights went back on; Harry who had been reading a book in Remus's room went back downstairs as he rightly assumed that Laura would bid her farewell.

The evening was quite pleasant in Harry’s opinion. It was a simple and unremarkable day, and Harry basked in the normalcy of it.

... ..

The day had come; he had been waiting for this moment for what felt like forever.

It was Christmas Eve, and he was going to see his friends again.

He was also going to see a specific Ravenclaw... that may have been the reason he was taking so long to get dressed today, going back and forth as he tried to find an appropriate ensemble.

It was about one in the afternoon and Harry had been cooking up a storm with Remus, mainly to keep the man from burning everything.

It was snowing lightly but the weatherman had warned that it would probably get much worse later in the day.

The roads were barely visible and cars lurched by carefully.

Walking downstairs, Harry was just in time to watch as the flames to the fireplace shot out in a green burst before a head became visible.

"Hello Mr. Weasley..." Harry greeted upon spotting the man.

"Harry, so good to see you. Just calling to see whether we can come on through." The man explained.

"Sure thing, come on over." Harry invited. He pulled the coffee table aside and called to Remus to let him know that the guests were arriving.

Just as the man walked downstairs, straightening his cuff to his shirt, the first Weasley entered.

Ron shot out of the fireplace and slid to a stop where the coffee table had just been.

Coughing out powder, Ron looked up into the eyes of his friend who smiled at him in welcome.

“Harry, long time no see... hello Professor Lupin.” Ron said upon spotting the man.

“Hello Ron, welcome.” The man greeted while extending a hand to welcome the boy.

Soon the floo activated again spewing forth the twins, Ginny, Mrs. Weasley, and finally Arthur Weasley.

They went through the motions of welcoming everyone to the home. Harry and Ginny were a little more awkward. Mrs. Weasley immediately set about taking the trays that she held within her grasp towards the kitchen.

Mr. Weasley carried a sack full of presents like a red headed farther Christmas and asked where to put them. Harry said to just set them down by the tree and thanked the man.

It had not been five minutes before the floo activated once more, and Mr. Lovegoods head shot out.

“Oh, Arthur, you’re already here. Hello Mr. Potter, shall we come through then...?” He asked politely.

“Please do sir...” Harry invited. Squashing the excitement and nervousness that had spiked at the mans appearance.

As Mr. Lovegood’s head vanished from the flame, Harry took a step back to give room. Within seconds the fire ignited once more and a familiar feminine form shot out of the green flames.

Harry was amused to note that Luna had about the same trouble with magical travel that he had had.

She skid across the floor on her bottom, coughing up ash and soot. Harry noted to himself that she had a very nice cough.

Blinking her eyes wintrily she looked up from the floor into the beaming face of one Harry potter.

Harry stuck his hands out to her in assistance. She grabbed a hold and Harry lifted her up close to him.

“Marry Christmas Harry.” Luna said in greeting.

“Marry Christmas Luna, you look lovely.” He greeted back, giving the girl a hug in the process.

She was dressed in a long dark brown frilled skirt that went down past her knees, and a light white vest overlaying what looked like a school shirt. Her normally straight hair had been curled slightly to give it a few ringlets that bounced around her head. She had obviously went to some effort to look nice today, and Harry wanted to make sure she knew that he noticed.

Luna smiled humbly to herself. “Thanks.” She said with a slight blush.

In the mirror over the fireplace, Harry could just make out Ron and the twins sorrowful head nods.

“We’ve lost him...” George said sadly.

“He was so young...” Fred added while placing a comforting hand on his twins shoulder.

Luna giggled slightly at that and Harry couldn’t help but cling to her just a tad more. He spared the twins a mocking sardonic smile before the floo activated and Luna’s Farther stepped out.

Automatically, Harry’s grip on the girl loosened a tad, purely on instinct and he fidgeted a little to place Luna in front of him like a shield. Although Barry Lovegood had warmed up to him a little near the end of their last meeting, Harry was still utterly terrified of the man.

Luna, noticing Harry’s loosened grip smiled at him mockingly before gripping him a little harder in compensation, as her farther slid out of the fireplace in a more graceful manner.

Immediately his eyes locked onto the pair and Harry gulped just a little.

In Harry's opinion, the man's eyes sparked malevolently upon first contact before beaming at the pair brightly.

"Good afternoon Mr. Potter." He greeted with a hand extended. Harry took it and gave the man a firm shake.

"Hello sir..." Harry said politely.

Harry could sense the amusement around the room from all the watching parties.

"Barry, How are you..." Remus's Voice thankfully interrupted. Harry turned to see the man walk into the room with a welcoming smile.

"Remus, I am quite fine, thank you for having us." Mr. Lovegood replied back.

"No problem whatsoever, it's our pleasure."

Remus looked around the room spotting each of the teens. "I believe this is all your first times here, Harry do you want to show your friends around.

"Sure..." Harry replied back. Proud that he for once had a room to show off to Ron.

Harry motioned for Ron and the twins to head up stairs, Ginny awkwardly followed still not looking in Harry's direction. Harry wondered how he would handle the girl, as he didn't feel like dampening the holiday by holding the grudge he so rightfully held towards her. And reminding himself that the girl was Luna's friend, he didn't want to ostracise her. He decided he might want to pull her aside for a little chat afterwards, if only to clear the air.

As Harry made a motion to follow, Remus laid a hand down on his shoulder and leaned into whisper.

"If you don't mind Harry, I'd appreciate it if you left the door open..." the man asked.

Harry somehow knew the man was referring to Luna. Harry hadn't really thought too much on that aspect of it, having his girlfriend in his room, the implications....

They were in a group so certainly there wasn't going to be any... stuff going on, especially considering how early in the relationship they were in, and his own innate shyness. Still Harry's cheeks flamed at the request.

Harry nodded a quickly and tried not to look the man in the face. Remus thankfully understood that it was an awkward subject and didn't say anything further, having asked what he felt was necessary.

Within the man's mind, Harry understood that he was feeling just as awkward with the new status quo of their relationship as he was. They got along fine, and Harry couldn't ask for a better home, but it was the new awkwardness of living with someone as a family. He felt responsible for Harry, but didn't want to overstep his bounds seeing as Harry was on the brink of adulthood, and to treat him differently would have been taken badly. Though there were just something's Remus felt had to be said and done, if only because Harry somewhere in side his mind knew that he needed it, if only to confirm that there was someone there to look out for him.

Harry wandered away from the living room and up the stairs where his friends were waiting.

"It's right over there..." Harry pointed at the slightly ajar door on the left.

"Um... Ginny, can I talk to you for a second." Harry asked quietly.

Her brothers shot him curious stares, Ron who had learned the most of the two's spat seemed to understand what Harry was attempting and ushered his brothers into Harry's Room.

Luna shot him a curious stare but nodded and followed along.

Ginny fidgeted with a thread from her jumper. This being the first time Harry had addressed her in a few months.

“What did you need Harry.” She asked while not looking him in the eyes, remembering the anger and spite that had been there the last time.

Unsure, what to say, Harry fidgeted himself, wondering whether he should have planned something ahead of time.

“Look Ginny... I, ah, I thought that maybe we could just clear the air and everything, there’s no need to keep this thing going like it has.” Harry answered awkwardly.

“Oh...” she asked curiously as if she wasn’t entirely sure what Harry meant. She knew, but somehow it was easier for her to face facts when she pretended she didn’t.

“Um yeah... last time, things were said, I just thought we could move past that and all. I mean, it’s Christmas...” Harry said with a slight smile.

Ginny’s face split into a smile of her own as well, even if it was a small one.

“I’d like that Harry...” looking up she stared into the jade eyes, with a mischievous smile. “Someone needs to be around to set you straight.” She remarked in humour.

Harry laughed in response, not really understanding what she meant by that, but just wanting the moment to be over with.

“Come on, I don’t want to leave the twins in my room too long, who knows what they lay in wait for me.”

Ginny smiled more freely, while following the teen into the room.

Ron was lounging on Harry’s bed as if he owned it; the twins were observing Harry’s runes projects intently, while conferring with each

other secretly. Luna leaned against the window, just staring outside at the park. It was a small room, but everyone could walk about freely.

Ron spotting the two enter, and smiled at the more casual pair.

“Nice room Harry, kind of sparse though. We’ll have to get you some quidditch posters, a few pictures... Maybe repaint it...” Ron ticked off on his fingers.

The boy was already planning on ways to make Harry’s room a shrine to the cannons, Harry knew it.

Luna turned away from the window and smiled, her eyes wandered between Harry and Ginny for a bit but she didn’t ask about their conversation.

“The park looks nice Harry, do you think we can go out into the snow?” she asked.

“I don’t see why not, did you guys bring jackets?” Harry asked.

“Mum, spells the sweaters warm, we should be fine.” Fred explained. Harry knew the twins were already plotting ways to repay Harry for his mini avalanche.

Luna frowned for a second. “I didn’t bring one...” she said sadly.

Harry smiled. “Don’t worry, I still have the jumpers I got from Mrs. Weasley, you can wear one of them...” Harry suggested, Making his way to his closet and rifling through his clothes, in the back he found his old sweaters, picking up a pair from his fourth year that he thought would fit the girl, Harry handed it to her.

Luna smiled happily as she looked over the knitted jumper, the large H prominently displayed.

Luna pulled it over top her head and wore it over her other clothes and smiled to herself at the coziness and scents it gave off.

Harry smiled himself, just loving the act of letting the girl borrow his clothes. It felt so... right.

Harry paused to think on that thought...'I am getting mushy.'

"Come on downstairs, Remus has an entire drawer full on mittens and gloves, I don't entirely know why, but it's convenient." Harry remarked, dragging everyone away.

What followed was a very wet and chilling snow ball fight. It started as a factionalized group, with everyone out for themselves, and delved into alliances, where the twins joined together, then Ron with Ginny, then the pair of pairs together against Harry, and Luna.

Harry who didn't want to reveal his wandless powers played fair and tossed snow at them the normal way... most of the time at least. When he thought he could get away with it, he would wordlessly shake a branch the twins were under, burying them under snow once more, or banish a snowball at Ron from behind when no one was watching.

The ultimate betrayal happened though when Harry was about to strike once more against the twins... and then Luna of all people turned on him, launching snowballs at the back of his head.

Harry smiled deviously at the girl and sought his revenge. Luna screamed happily as she tossed snow balls over her shoulders as Harry ran after her holding a handful of snow he intended to hold to her neck.

Harry was blinded for a moment when a snowball glided soundlessly and smacked him in the face, knocking his glasses away.

Soon he was pummelled from all sides.

A Bright purple blur lead the charge.

Tonks had arrived.

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The teens wandered in, dripping snow with bright pink faces and smiles across their faces. The adults greeted them, and Mr. Lovegood insisted they stand still for pictures.

Harry had a feeling the man had been taking pictures earlier as he had noticed bright flashes emanating from the house every now and then.

This had brought Remus's attention and soon the man had pulled out his own camera and demanded the same.

That started a whole new slew of activity as every now and then, when people least suspected it, a person would snap pictures at the unsuspecting victim.

Tonks herself was chatting up a storm with Remus; the man was interested on her take as a defence professor. They joked about how they and Moody should start a club as everyone still called them professor even if they no longer taught.

Bob had also shown up with Tonks, leaned stiffly by the entryway, although Tonks led him about the room often, and when not with Remus, with the silent fellow whispering conspiratorially toward the man.

Harry also noticed the offness about the man, if Harry wasn't mistaken, the man seemed to be blushing?

Harry wandered over to the tree and spotted the pair of presents by the floor. One of them was labelled to himself and Remus, but another was labelled "for: B, from: T."

Assuming B wasn't for Barry Lovegood, Harry put the pieces together and immediately went to Luna to share the news, if only to be able to claim credit for his theory later should it hold true.

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It was close to four and Harry knew that dinner was going to be served in a few hours, he was rifling through his drawers in his room, looking for his album Hagrid had gotten him first year.

Finding the album placed under his socks Harry pulled the book away, only to stare at the pair of odd socks that lay beneath it.

There laying beneath the book was a sock with a broomstick on it, and beneath it, another sock with snitches... Harry had forgotten to get Dobby a gift. The little elf would not really care one way or another, but Harry had gotten quite fond of the little guy, and felt like he deserved something other than a knobbly old pair of socks. He wasn't even sure if he would see the little guy over the holidays, but he wouldn't put it past the elf to be able to pop in despite the muggle wards.

If making a decision, Harry pulled the book out and wandered over to his drawer by his bed and pulled out a wallet. Check inside and noting that he still had plenty of money left over, he went down stairs.

"Harry, there you are, did you find it..." Remus asked.

"Yup..." Harry stated while revealing the album.

"Ah, Remus is it okay if I step out for a bit; I forgot to get a present for someone...." Harry asked.

"Oh, who?" Remus asked.

"You know him... one of the house elves...." Harry said.

"Dob...?" Remus never got to ask as Harry had quickly motioned with his hands to stop.

"Don't say his name, he might pop in..." Harry warned. He had no way to know how the little guy knew when he needed him but whenever he had said the elf's name, he was there.

Remus stared amusedly at the boy who could easily say the name of the most feared Dark lord within the century, but fretted at uttering the name of an enthusiastic house elf.

"I don't suppose that would be a problem, but were going to start dinner soon, how long do you think you'll be?" Remus asked.

"Not long, I just need to get to a department store, I think I saw a taxi waiting by the park, I'll be there and back before you guy's start. I don't want to go after; the stores might be closed." Harry said, hoping that the stores weren't already.

"Alright..." He looked over his shoulder at Bob and Tonks. Tonks was chatting amicably with Mrs. Weasley not noticing the man's stare. Bob on the other hand had heard and immediately stepped forward/

"You wouldn't mind going with him, I'll gladly go if you want to stay..." Remus asked. The man may have been a defence instructor but Bob was a bodyguard. Remus felt more comfortable with the man keeping Harry safe than he did with his own skills.

Bob gave a slight nod in confirmation that it was fine and stood beside Harry while shooting the man an uncharacteristic smile. It was uncharacteristic in the sense that Harry had never seen the man move his facial muscles for anything other than a twitch of the lips or squinting of the eyes.

Smiling in thanks he instructed Harry to dress warmly while he talked with Bob.

As he was stepping away to pull on his shoes, Harry noticed the white socked feminine feet stepping in front of him as he sat on the stairs.

"Are you going?" Luna asked.

"Yeah, I just got to go pick up an extra present, I should be back in an hour tops... I want to get there before the stores close" Harry explained.

“Oh, Who you buying for...?” She asked curiously.

“Um, you know that house elf I introduced you to?” Harry said.

“Dob...?”

“Don’t say his name....” Harry warned frantically.

Luna stared at him strangely. “Okay...” she said in confusion.

Looking over her shoulder, Harry spotted Tonks making her way over to Bob and Remus as well. Deciding that he had time, he motioned for Luna too follow him after making his way over to the tree and picking up a gift.

Walking upstairs Harry lead the girl into his room while leaving the door half open, mindful of Remus's request.

“I thought that maybe we could exchange gifts privately, I didn’t want to do it in front of everyone else...” Harry said nervously.

For some reason Luna blushed, but nodded. “I’d like that. Do you still have the gift I gave you...?” she asked.

Harry nodded while going to his desk drawer and pulling out a gift he had been resisting the urge to open for days on end.

“Open mine first...” Luna requested, while motioning to the package.

Harry complied with a smile and started to tear the wrapping gently away. Inside was a small wooden Box, it was a dark red wood with bronze hinges and a latch on the side. Harry stared at it curiously, looking up into the eyes of the girl in appreciation and puzzlement.

“Open it...” She encouraged.

Doing so, Harry pulled the latch and lifted the lid. Inside it was completely empty, not a thing could be heard, it was engraved with little decorations and other things but Harry couldn’t really see what he was supposed to be looking for.

And then he heard it.

Ever so gently, a soft pitter patter started to emanate from the box, Bluish mist started to form at the bottom and images of raindrops falling appeared.

“You can change the sounds and images it makes; I just thought that this would be appropriate, considering...” Luna said nervously.

“I love it, Thank you.” Harry said happily while hugging the girl in appreciation. It was very thoughtful in his opinion, and while he wasn’t one to normally keep music boxes, he knew he would listen to the melody the pitter patters made, quite often.

Luna blushed but smiled pleased that the gift had been well received.

After Harry let go of the girl, he reached out and grabbed the gift he had pulled from the tree.

“Now you...” Harry coaxed. Nervous about the gift he was about to give.

Luna smiled happily and took the package from him. She started to tear at the sides, of the paper, and revealed... a book.

“Myths and Mysteries: Proven true.” She read aloud. Looking up she stared at Harry confusedly but with a smile. “Thank you Harry...”

“Flip to the pages with the red tags...” Harry answered.

Looking at the boy curiously, Luna picked one from the middle and flipped it open.

Head Wumps: A mysterious creature that is said to have been where wizarding kind learned of the Imperious curse. They may cause individuals infested to say or do things that are not what they meant. Should you suspect an individual is infected, check the....

Immediately she flipped to another page, and another and another. Each tag indicated a creature or other odd phenomena the girl had uttered.

Harry had found the book while doing his shopping, flipping through it and finding no mention of the creatures Luna spoke of; Harry had asked the front desk whether it was possible to add in pages to books. The man at the counter had said it was a little unorthodox, but it was certainly possible.

For a fee of course.

Harry had instructed the man that he would send over a list of passages he wanted added and asked to have the gift shipped over to him as soon as it was finished.

Harry had spent the rest of the day recalling everything he could about the creatures and myths Luna had mentioned, writing them down as formally as possible; trying to make as few spelling errors as he could.

"I thought that, since the book didn't list them, I would, there's a space below each one if you wanted to add in other information..." Harry answered nervously, starting to think the gift was utterly stupid. He just wanted to show the girl that he was listening when she spoke, he wanted to show that it was okay that she believed in such things... he just wanted to show that he had made an effort for her.

Harry was blushing deeply, and couldn't meet the girl's eyes. He was about to try and dig himself out of the hole when he felt Luna's hands on his cheeks. Surprised at the gentle contact Harry looked up in time to see the girl lean in.

Harry felt her soft lips press genteelly against his own, lingering for a moment on his lips purposefully.

Harry was stunned... he was being kissed. There were no fireworks or sparks, he didn't see stars, his heart didn't swell three sizes, but he felt... he felt...

Truly, all he felt physically was the sensation of her lips pressing against his, but to him he could have sworn he felt the emotion behind the kiss. The affection, the warmth, the essence that was... Luna Lovegood.

Harry thought it was perfect.

Ever so gently Luna leaned back, her forehead touching Harry's, her lips just slightly away ready to go in for more. From what little Harry could see of her face from such close distances, she was blushing red, the curves of her lips as they parted to suck in breath.

He could smell her smell; a fruity smell, like banana's with a hint of vanilla.

"Thank you Harry..." she whispered. Her fingers still lingering on his cheek. Harry was surprised to note his own hand was gently cupping her face as well. He carelessly let his thumb graze over her skin, feeling the girl shudder from his touch.

Harry knew that she understood his reasoning for the gift, and she appreciated it, greatly.

"Thank you Luna... Merry Christmas." Harry whispered back.

He could feel his breath leaving him and bouncing off the girl, circulating the small gap in between them. The girl smiled happily...

She pulled the book closer to her chest; hugging it to the jumper she still wore.

"Harry...?" Remus's voice emanated from below.

Startled, Harry jumped back, and Luna shot up from the bed as if she had been scalded, realizing the intimate position they had just been in.

Harry knew his blush was damning but he just couldn't help it.

"Coming..." Harry called. Thankful the man didn't walk upstairs instead.

Turning back to face the girl, Harry smiled. "I'll be back in a bit, see you soon?" he asked.

Luna smiled, while grabbing a hold of his hand and giving it a squeeze.

Walking downstairs, Harry made his way to the door, with the goofiest of grins upon his face and dared not look up should he spot the face of the girls farther.

Pulling the black overcoat on, Harry walked towards the pair of legs by the door that he recognized to be Bobs.

Another set of legs walked into view and Harry recognized them to be Remus's.

"Everything okay Harry?" Remus asked.

"Everything's great Moony." Harry said brightly while avoiding looking at the man in the face should he spot the blush and silly grin.

"I'll be back soon, see ya." Harry said pulling the door open and walking outside, never noticing the twinkling eyes of the marauder.

... ..

Luckily for Harry the roads were practically bare and the store clerk to a little knickknacks shop he remembered passing by on a few occasions let him in. Harry already knowing what he wanted, looked for the most outrageous socks he could find. They had individual little toe spots, like mittens, only for feet. Getting a couple Harry quickly paid and found himself back in the cab within ten minutes.

"Sorry their kid, I'm going to have to take the long way, snow plow just went by, blocked off the intersection." The driver warned.

"No problem," Harry said brightly. Normally he would just walk the difference, but that storm the weatherman had been hinting at had finally hit. Harry was lucky to find a taxi driver at all considering the

whether. The city had valiantly tried to best mother nature this year by issuing saltings, and numerous snow plows to keep the roads clear for traffic. Sadly, Mother Nature was not to be deterred, the snow just kept falling. It was more than a white Christmas, it was an ice age.

Harry sat comfortably in the back seat of the cab, with the bag full of socks in hand. Beside him, Bob sat as silent as normal, keenly observing the streets, and the driver.

“So how’s it going Bob?” Harry asked.

Bob turned to stare at Harry, he raised his eyebrow curiously.

“You enjoying the holiday’s... We haven’t talked much, how’s life been treating ya.” Harry questioned. The man answered him... with a barely noticeable shrug.

That was progress as far as Harry was concerned, the man was really loosening up, Harry thought the twins might have spiked the man’s drink.

“So...” Harry said after a few moments, trying to find something to fill the silence. The driver took a slow turn into a main street that Harry knew to be filled with signs that warned against taking certain turns. The Driver seemed to consider taking a turn anyway, before he noticed an officer eyeing him warningly, seemingly knowing what he had been planning to do.

Deciding to amuse himself, Harry decided to experiment and test out his theory.

“Tonks, has been teaching us defence this year, she’s not to bad either.” Harry commented airily while keeping an eye on the man.

‘Bingo!’ Harry mentally cried in triumph. There was a slight twitch to the man that Harry had recognized from Luna’s many attempts at engineering a reaction out of the silenced bodyguard. He was definitely uncomfortable.

"I noticed she brought two presents with her today, one for us, and another for someone with the initial B." Harry remarked.

"I don't think she meant it for Mr. Lovegood, your name wouldn't happen to start with a B, would it..." Harry coaxed.

The man was definitely uncomfortable with the line of questioning. There was something about interrogating a man twice his size and succeeding that tickled Harry's funny bone.

"Wait, your names not actually Bob, is it?" Harry asked for clarification. He had just made up the name on the spot when he had been treated to the silent treatment of the man. He kind of looked like a Bob, but that didn't say much.

Bob stared at the teen unblinkingly. Harry stared back, trying to divine the information out of the man like he had done other times with his mental powers.

No dice. All it resulted in was a short lived staring contest which Bob won in the end.

"Oh, fine, keep your secrets..." Harry huffed petulantly. He turned and stared out the window and watched the buildings going by.

"But God help you if you get her Jewellery, Trust me..." Harry warned.

The Cab came to a gentle stop that was soon followed by the colourful curses of their cabby.

"Damn, Gits!" He cursed, as another snow plow mockingly drove by and shovelled snow in their path making it highly unlikely that they could exit.

The snow plow itself stopped along the sidewalk and Harry could see the man inside pulling out a sheet of paper to consult.

"Tell you what folks, I'm going to go have a chat with the fellow and see if he can clear us a path. I'll pause your metre considering it's the holidays and all, no need to charge you for time you're just sitting

about.” The man offered generously. Harry understood that that barely happened and thanked the man for his consideration.

As the man got out he motioned towards the church to their right.

“May I suggest you guys head inside, I don’t know how long this would take, and I don’t want to keep the car running. The father there is a great old chap. Just keep warm and I’ll come get ya when it’s all clear.” The man offered.

Harry thanked the man once more and motioned for Bob to follow.

Harry Honestly didn’t remember the last time he had been to a church. The last time might have been when he was very young.

A time when he had still been hoping to gain some kind of affection from the Dursley’s.

Harry remembered how naïve he was at that time, hoping that if he stayed quite and did his best, the Dursley’s would love him and, he would have a loving family just like his cousin.

Harry sardonically realized that the Dursley’s had probably only taken him to the church hoping that God might smite him down for them.

They weren’t an overly religious bunch either; it was just another avenue to them to show the world how respectable they were, they literally had a set of clothes which were their, Sunday best. Vernon’s, most expensive suit, Petunia’s most pious dresses, with shiny gold Crucifixes around her unnaturally long neck. Dudley in the best children’s vest that Harry often thought made him look like a particularly fat penguin. Harry of course did not deserve such fine clothes, but at least got clothes of his own for once. A tattered second hand suit the Dursley’s had bought from a thrift store for him.

Shaking his head, Harry brushed the unwelcome memories aside as he stared up at the tall building. It had been a very long time since he had stepped foot inside one of these places. An uncomfortable reminder of the life he had been trying to leave behind.

Walking forward purposefully Harry walked up the iced, yet shovelled steps purposefully, as if mocking the church's attempts to humble him. He doubted he was going to be a very religious man, he believed in Heaven and the afterlife, if only because it was ingrained in him from childhood, but that didn't mean he had to like the church itself.

Walking to the top of the steps, Harry turned around and spotted their cabby; gesturing agitatedly with the man in the snow plow... it didn't look like the snow plow would be out of their way anytime soon.

Resigning himself Harry pulled open the door and walked inside. Bob Following in his wake.

Immediately the sounds of singing assaulted his ears. Looking up, Harry saw that he had just walked into the middle of a choir performance. Luckily no one paid him any mind, as there were multiple camera's pointed at the front. The smiling faces of parents littered the floor as they stared at the children upfront.

The church itself looked quite old, turn of the century old...

It was small as well, about as big as his and Remus's flat if it had been hollowed out.

Behind the children a large hanging cross hung from the high ceilings.

Walking forward unnoticed Harry listened to the song.

The children were singing the lyrics to a song he recognized, God Rest Ye Merry Gentleman... he had heard it often enough thought he holiday's being played in his old school to recognize the lyrics.

They weren't heavenly or anything. They were a children's choir, often singing off key or a little too enthusiastically in some areas, One boy was belting out words out of sync with the rest while staring proudly at a couple up front who joyously took pictures and recorded video.

Looking over his shoulder, he noticed the proud smile of a particular man who was holding up a camera while smiling proudly at a little girl.

Harry for a moment wondered whether this is the type of life he would have had with his parents. He didn't like to think about this too often, as he felt like he was needlessly making himself depressed, living in maybes and this and that's that couldn't be, but every now and then he just had to wonder.

Would he have been like the boy upfront, belting forth lyrics off-key, while his parents took pictures proudly, would he have visited church, would he have been a religious child, going to Sunday school and mass... It was an interesting thought, but utterly futile, he was who he was and he didn't really want to change now. His life was finally starting to pull itself together, he was facing his destiny, he was doing well in school, he had escaped the Dursley's, and he had a home with a man who genuinely cared for him. Hell, he even had Luna; things were finally going great for him.

The man Harry had noticed earlier, with the sandy grey hair and a bright smile turned and spotted Harry, staring at the little girl blankly.

"That's my little girl..." He boasted proudly.

The little brown haired girl in the flowing white dress and garland wrapped around her head sung loudly and brightly.

"She has a lovely voice, you should be quite proud..." Harry complimented.

The man beamed, "Oh I am." He assured.

Suddenly, the music reached a crescendo and all the children bowed happily to the applause of all the parents.

The children all quickly stepped off the stage and wandered over to each parent who enthusiastically greeted them with praise. The little girl, walked forward and leapt into the arms of her father while a brown haired woman with a heart shaped face smiled joyously at the girl and kissed her on the forehead happily.

Up on stage, a man walked forward from the side while smiling genially to the room.

“That was lovely, so concludes the mass, a big Hand to Sister Tailor and her Sunday class.” The man encouraged while clapping proudly.

An elderly woman with short hair and wrinkled skin, smiled from the piano, standing up she humbly bowed to the applause.

Harry clapped politely while wondering whether she had a twin sister who taught French in Surrey.

“There will be an evening Mass tomorrow for those who wish to come, Have a Merry Christmas, May the Lord Be with you.”

“And with you...” The crowd replied back in sync.

Harry almost snorted to himself when the man said Lord, if only because he immediately thought of Voldemort. He had been in the wizarding world too long if this is where his thoughts went.

Harry watched everyone as they left the building. The little girl he had been watching earlier had her mom helping her put on a fluffy blue jacket over her white choir robes. While her dad shook hands with one of the other church members.

“Merry Christmas...” A woman wished as she walked by Harry.

“Merry Christmas, mam.” Harry wished back.

Many wished him the same as he was standing by the doors. The family he had been watching made their way over.

“Merry Christmas, son.” The man wished while extending a hand. His other latched onto the little girl who was in-between him and his wife.

“Merry Christmas, sir ... happy holidays.” Harry wished back, looking to the rest of the family at the last.

The women smiled at him and the girl seemed to hide behind her father's leg, while peeking out to spy on Harry. It reminded him of Emmy and Harry couldn't help but smile warmly at the girl. He had grown quite fond of his Neighbour.

"You sung wonderfully..." Harry addressed to the girl, who immediately twittered closer to her father's leg.

"What do we say dear...?" Her mother asked in reminder.

"Thank you..." a little voice whispered barely audible.

"You're welcome..." Harry responded kindly with a smile.

With that and another round of Merry Christmases, Harry and Bob were left alone in the stone and wood building.

Unsure what to do, Harry wandered forward, and looked around the room. Bob stayed by the door casually allowing Harry his space.

The floor and walls were actually quite similar to the great hall with the stone architecture; it put Harry's mind at ease slightly, not realizing how much comfort he drew from the ancient building until he was away from it. He could hear some creaking from the old beams above his head,

The beam above the pews in particular looked quite dilapidated. Harry could see the amateur patch work someone had applied to the support structure.

The hanging cross itself was quite fascinating to Harry for a number of reasons.

It appeared to be hand carved, though its bottom hung well off the floor, Harry could see that at one point the structure had been planted into the floor. It appeared as though the bottom had been snapped at some point, and instead of repairing it and risk lowering the holy symbol they had hung it from the ceiling.

The arms of the cross were binded together by ropes giving it that authentic look, but Harry could see brackets hidden under the rope.

The most interesting thing about the structure in Harry's opinion was the large railroad spike like nails that protruded from the wood at significant locations.

It was fascinating to observe in a morbid way. There was a certain symbolism with having the cross hang the day before the supposed birth of the person it was so famous for. It was almost like a grim Reaper, foreshadowing the death of a man, being present before and after, always their like a wraith waiting to come and get him.

Needless to say, Harry was never that enamoured with the symbol.

"Hello my son, are you waiting for your family..." A kind voice asked.

Startled Harry spun around and came face to face with the man who he had seen bid farewell to the mass of people.

"Oh, um no sir, farther..." Harry said unsurely. 'Was he catholic or Christian, which one did you call a Father?' Harry wondered to himself.

"Our Taxi driver; he's trying to clear the road to take us home. He told us to wait inside, I hope that's okay, we can leave..." Harry said unsurely.

"Nonsense my boy..."

'Why did so many people call me that...?'

"You are of course welcome to stay." The man welcomed.

Harry noticed Bob was looking at him curiously, his hand on his waist. He was walking forward, closing the distance between them.

The priest/pastor/revron/father, noticing Harry's stare turned to look over his shoulder and spotted Bob walking closer.

“Hello, Are you with my young friend here...?” He asked genially.

Bob nodded with a pleasant smile on his face, while his hand still lay on his wand.

“He doesn’t talk much...”Harry explained.

The priest nodded accepting the unique pair.

“I am curious though, why aren’t you with your family on this day?”
The man asked politely.

“I just stepped out to pick up a late present for a friend...” Harry said in excuse. He didn’t feel like going into the whole, ‘my parents are dead’, ‘oh I’m so sorry’ hoopla.

The man didn’t call Harry on it, but Harry had the feeling the man knew Harry was avoiding the question.

He looked between the two for a moment and seemed to come to a decision.

“Follow me, I’d like to share something with you two.” The man asked while motioning to a large pine tree by a gated door which Harry recognized as a baptismal basin.

Harry gave Bob a curious look, before following the man. Bob followed step for step keeping Pace with the two.

The man stepped around the tree and disappeared behind a fluttering of curtains that hung behind the tree.

Curious, Harry stepped behind and pulled the red curtain aside to reveal an ancient wooden staircase with the man waiting at the top.

Enticed by mysterious spaces, Harry followed up the creaking stairs and stepped up into a small storage space.

Boxes and knickknacks littered the walls, some bibles and a set of costumes that looked like they were meant for plays and other things lay to one side.

The space was about as large as Remus's Living room; they were apparently just above the entrance. The floors here, unlike bellow, were made from planks of wood and were worn and dusty.

Up by the front wall stood the man by an ornate rose glass window which depicted a classic scene of Mother Mary and her infant son in her arms.

"On special occasions, my boy...I sometimes like to come up and look through the eye's of the lord." The man said while indicating the eyes of the glass saviour.

Harry stared at the man for a moment. An eye raised.

"What, I thought it was witty..." the man defended.

Harry couldn't help but snort at the kind man. The man smiled seemingly victorious in his efforts by Harry's amused noise.

"Take a look my boy." The man invited.

Humouring the man, Harry walked forward and leaned in. Green Jade stared through the Glazed blue and looked out onto the world below him.

Children played on the streets. All the children from the choir had taken to an impromptu snow ball fight. The camera's that had been recording their singing were now trained on the children as they tossed snow balls between one another.

The little girl he had watched up front was running between her friends laughing joyously and shrieking in glee as she tossed snow balls. Her parents had their camera out recording the Christmas moment.

Harry couldn't help but smile at the scene before him; it reminded him of his snowball fight earlier in the day with Luna and his friends. These were the moments he loved. The moments where he could be a normal teenager with friends. The moments where he didn't have dark lords after him or learning to fight to stay alive... moments where everything was as simple as amusing themselves with balls of frozen water.

"Everything seems so much easier when you look through the eyes of a child. Don't you think?"

Harry turned away from the scene and gave the man an amused quirked eye.

"Oh come now, that was profound!" The man defended under Harry's stare.

Harry couldn't help but like the man, he was very easy going.

"I'll be downstairs if you need me, Stay as long as you want..." the man invited before taking his leave.

Harry nodded his thanks and just looked out onto the scene below. Curiously he turned to look at the cab and saw that it was still there. The plow as well. But as hard as Harry stared he couldn't see the drivers.

Checking his watch he noted that his hour was almost up.

He was a tad too far to walk home in time considering they had taken the long way, and considering the amount of snow, Harry wasn't willing to risk it.

It would have been so much easier if the muggles had not been using their suppressors. They could just portkey or apparate home. Harry wondered if a floo pad was located anywhere near by. He was about to ask Bob just that when his Seeker eyes spotted a flash of movement.

Curiously. Harry focused on the dark blur.

It was right beside an alley by the corner. Close to the snow plow and taxi. It was hard to see with so much snow in between the two.

Suddenly Harry paled.

There by an alley, stood a black robed form, with a bone white mask. A wand extended in ready.

Death Eaters...

Quickly jerking away from the mural Harry grabbed Bob by the arm in a firm grip and pointed at the window.

Startled by the unusual action bob turned to stair at Harry confusedly.

"Death eaters..." Harry whispered hurriedly while point at the alley through the window.

Immediately the man's eyes widened in alarm and he looked through the window to stair for himself.

"Where?" the man asked in hurry as he searched the street.

Harry paused for a moment. The man had just spoken...'Get your head together Potter!' his voice yelled at him reminding him that he had a situation here that was more important.

"By the alley where the cab is, I saw one, there are probably more..." Harry answered.

Looking down through the red glass of the Mother Mary, Harry stared at the children Below.

Things would not go well if they were stuck in the middle of a fight. Things would not go well if he was stuck in a fight...

'It was flippin Christmas for God's sake' Harry mentally cried.

"We have to get the families out of here; they can't be in the crossfire." Harry reminded the man.

"No..."

Harry stared at the now talkative Bob in askance..." What do you mean No... they'll be killed!" Harry whispered harshly.

"I need to get the families out of here, you need to escape, there is no we." The man informed him as he stood up purposefully pulling his wand out readying for a fight.

"I can help; I've been trained for months. You can't get them all out of here on your own." Harry condemned.

"That's not my concern, you can not defeat them without magic." The man informed him.

"No, you can't defeat them without magic, I can" Harry informed him harshly. Creating a blue shield ball in his hand to the mans shocked surprise, Harry squashed it and stared at the man pointedly.

"Now either help me get them out of here, or get help, because you're not getting rid of me!" Harry whispered harshly.

Harry knew the man was just trying to protect him, trying to do his job, but Harry wasn't about to let families and children die because of him. Somehow the Death eaters had found him, there was no way it was a coincidence that one was just lurking his neighbourhood. And if they found him, they weren't about to just wish him a happy holiday and pass him fruitcake. They would want him dead, and they would have a way to do it.

"Mr. Potter..." the man called as Harry side stepped his grasp and headed down the stairs to first get the Preacher/Revron Man.

"Father, you have to leave, there are dangerous..." Harry stopped as he made his way to the bottom steps with his wand extended pointing at the most unwelcome sight he had seen since the ministry.

There in front of him was the Father; he was standing nervously by the entrance to the church. At his throat a jagged knife.

The person holding the knife was clad in black flowing cloth; a snow white mask on the person's face.

There were about four other black robed Death Eaters beside the one with the knife. One of the four stepped away from the group with a casual grace that did nothing to hide the mal-intent they had for the man. Leaning against the man like an old buddy, with their hand around the man shoulder, the Death eater begged.

"Dear farther, please, oh please forgive me... for I have sinned." A familiar voice whispered mock repentantly.

"The thing is, Oh this is so embarrassing, it felt soo good." The women admitted in an ecstatic sneer.

Pulling the mask off her face with a grace that only strained at Harry's nerves; the death Eater revealed her once beautiful face...

The face of a woman who had caused Harry so much pain...

...The face of Bellatrix Lestrange.

AN: Howdy yall, I've been working quite hard trying to get this chapter done quickly. When I had finished I found that the chapter was just under 20 000 words... which was a lot.

Instead I split the chapter into two, giving myself time to edit the last and most important bit.

I was going to cut this chapter short before it was Christmas eve, but I decided to include the rest if only to end on a cliff hanger, otherwise that would make two filler chapters in a row. I didn't want that.

Plus I finally get to include Harry's kiss with Luna.

It might seem slightly hokey, but I didn't really want to make the kiss seem ho hum to Harry. It had to be better than she pressed her lips against mine but not with orgasmic fireworks and tongue action...

I'm going to post the next chapter probably Friday, it'll be short, around 6000 words but it will be the most action filled chapter I have written yet.

Warning, very violent. Atleast in my opinion.

Anyway till next time

Quazi

Chapter 23 - I'm so going to Hell (Part II)

Turning around, Bellatrix stared in mock surprise at the strained white knuckled boy in front of her.

"Well small world, if it isn't little baby Potter. How have you been, did you have a good holiday, lots of presents?" She asked as sincerely as possible; like she was a favourite aunt or acquaintance.

Harry stayed silent as he weighed the risks of wandlessly accioing her tongue from her body.

But he was worried about the knife before him.

He had already tried to summon it away from the Death Eater; it was resistant to him, it might have been warded somehow to prevent summoners. Making any moves would be very risky for the man in the death Eaters grasp.

"So quiet little Potter; where's that spunk, that zest you once had. Why I remember the last time we met, oh the fire in your eyes... how the ladies must swoon for you." The woman fluttered her eye lashes at Harry girlishly.

"What do you want?" Harry asked through gritted teeth. Harry could sense Bob behind him, he was laying in wait ready to leap to Harry's defence when he needed it. Harry could hear the man's thoughts and emotion's; something he would have killed for months or even moments earlier. Now it only made him feel sick and agitated.

The man was mentally preparing himself. He was preparing himself for death. He was willing to give his life for Harry.

This wasn't some close relative, this wasn't some secret godfather, and this wasn't even really a friend. This was a man who was given a job to protect, and he was willing to give it his all. Harry didn't want the man's death on his head. He was going to make sure of it, Bob or whatever the man's name was... he was going to live.

“What do I want...? Now Harry, you don’t sound like you want to even see me. I’m hurt, I truly am... I’d cry if I weren’t afraid of making a scene.” Bellatrix pouted.

Some of the death eaters chuckled slightly at Harry as he continued to stare hatefully at the woman.

“I mean after all the effort we’ve gone through, After all the streets we had patrolled, dressed as muggle filth, just waiting and looking. I was lucky, my Lord, he somehow knew that you were in this area...” The Priest turned incredulous eyes to the women at the references of a Lord.

“I was so hoping to find you, to be able to see you, just once more...” the woman enunciated enraptured with her luck.

“Well you’ve found me, what are you going to do, you can’t perform any spells. You can’t do anything.” Harry taunted, keeping wary eyes on the holy man.

The man stared at Harry in confusion at the reference to spells.

“Oh you think so do you, remember young Harry, as impressive a feat as this suppression is, it was performed by Muggles. They are a dimwitted breed; they can’t do the job right.”

With that, she took out her wand...

Harry’s own wand trained on her in alarm.

She looked at him mockingly while pointing it at a pew.

“Wingardium Leviosa!” The women cried aloud like a first year just practicing the spell.

Incredulously, Harry stared as the pew started to rise higher and higher.

“I don’t pretend to understand why, but we’ve been testing and practicing for so long, we’ve been going through every spell

imaginable and we've found a few spells that still work. Do you really think that the muggle's could hold us at bay for long...?" The woman taunted threateningly.

The last line flashed in his mind warningly. Harry's perception flashed from Bob to Bellatrix and what he sensed was very unnerving.

They had found a way to overcome the suppression field; they were going to be able to use their wands completely. Soon, very very soon.

Harry still had his wandless magic and he could transform, but in such a small space transforming would only hinder him, and as fun as it would be to Redcut the women with his unstable magic, he was more likely to just become a larger target with more places to be hit with by an Avada Kedavra... his wings weren't exactly great for dodging.

"Now Young Harry, in the spirit of the season, I'll make you a deal. Come with me, let me eviscerate you, and the muggles can live. I promise it will only hurt for a second." The woman offered, as if she were being generous. A bright cheery smile on her face that disturbed Harry to no end.

"Don't do it son, don't...." The priest was cut off as the edge of the blade cut slightly at the man's neck, drawing out a small stream of blood in warning.

Bellatrix looked over her shoulder at the man and smiled. Turning back to Harry she amusedly remarked.

"Muggles..." She smiled fondly, as if the man was a silly little puppy trying to climb stairs or was chewing on her favourite slippers.

"Do I look stupid, you'll just kill them anyway..." Harry remarked, trying to buy himself some time, for any kind of advantage or plan.

"True, I didn't actually think you'd believe that. But we'll make it quick. This offer isn't going to be available to you forever; There are much worse things than death, I believe your headmaster has says that often enough. Trust me; compared to what we could do... death is

preferable. I suggest you decide quickly as you only have..." She reached into her robe and pulled out an old pocket watch.

"Oh, half a minute... what do you say Harry, decide now, I do promise I will end the muggles quickly...." She offered.

"What happens in half a minute?" Harry asked in morbid curiosity; ignoring the lack lustre offer.

"Tick tock Harry..." The women announced, ignoring the question all together. "20 seconds left." She smiled.

Franticly Harry's eyes wandered the room; He had to find something to help him.

By the front table there were left over garlands from the children's choir, on the pew's there were a few bibles and mini pencils.

There was a wicker collection box upfront, with a bottle of liquid that Harry wasn't sure about. It was a tad yellow, and didn't look like something he would drink.

"10 seconds..." Bellatrix enunciated.

Harry's eyes focused on the man with the knife to his neck.

"9"

All the wands were now pointed at Harry. He was right; they were going to cast spells.

'But how?'

"8"

Harry could feel Bob resigning himself; he was going to jump in front of Harry as he didn't want to risk Harry being pushed into another spell. He was going to count on Harry being able to dodge and maybe miraculously escaping.

“7”

Harry had had enough. With his wand extended, as if he was about to cast a spell, he took a pose like one he had seen Snape take, where his wand was pointed loosely while his back hand was up behind him.

With his wand as a distraction Harry flicked his left hand.

Immediately, bibles, pews and other objects flew at the surprised death eaters. They batted them away with wingardiums that barely nudged them out of their path, But Harry had used that time to take the unknown bottle of liquid to bash into the man holding the priest, while simultaneously accioing the man out of the Death eaters grasp.

The bottle smashed against his face and soaked his robes and eyes, as the priest yelled in fright as he sailed out of the man's grip and over to Harry.

He landed with a thump by Harry and looked at the teen with wide eyes.

The black overcoat, the battle ready pose, the stern hardened eyes, they all told the man that the boy was more dangerous than he had ever imagined; and clearly so, if he had caused the impossible mayhem he had just bore witness to.

Harry could feel Bob's surprise and mental cursing as Harry ruined his chances of dieing a martyr. The man ran the rest of the stairs and pulled Harry aside as Bellatrix took the knife out of the hands of the man who was rubbing liquid out of his eyes and flung it with deadly accuracy at Harry.

Wide eyed Harry stared at the knife and mentally shielded himself.

Bellatrix stared in shock as the knife seemingly stopped mid air and bounced to the left where it clinked harmlessly against a wall. Bob and the priest stared as well, this not being a normal occurrence for the two.

Deciding to be more proactive, Harry summoned the pencils from the pews and with a force that was unnatural, flung them at the death eaters. Most dodged, but one man was unlucky enough to have a pencil fling into his throat and embed itself almost completely within.

Stunned and in shock the man grasped at his neck, and tried to pry the writing the device out of his neck. Almost immediately the wound started to spew forth blood at a rate that was not healthy.

The man took a few steps forward, before his knees gave way and he fell to the floor leaking the important liquid.

Harry tried to put the thought out of his mind; this was his first true kill. He would deal with that later, he had to stay alive.

BOOM

Suddenly A loud explosion emanated outside, a bright light shone through cracks in the door and he could feel an oppressive cloud he had not been aware of before, simply vanish. Harry knew his wand would work now.

There were screams and frightened yelling outside, but Harry had to ignore that as he watched every death eater in the building level a wand at him, he had proven to be too dangerous to let live.

The tips of their wands glowed Green as they cried the killing Curse.

Harry saw Bob try to make his way to Harry, but Harry banished the man back behind a pew with the Priest while summoning the first object he could see.

A rectangular shape impacted with the concentrated spell fire that had aimed for his heart. The Holly book glowed green in the wake of the multiple curses before it simply vaporised in a ball of Green flame.

Harry had just destroyed a bible. He really hoped God would understand.

Diving behind a Pew of his own, He upturned the seat and used it as a solid shield as he took pot shots at the death Eaters.

“Kill Him...” Bellatrix Screeched angrily. “Kill Everyone.”

Looking over he spotted Bob Franticly signalling him.

“Get over here...” He ordered in-between spell fire. The man fired off a Reducto that caused the opposite wall to crumble down around the enemy. Unfortunately as the building was side by side another building, it was not a viable exit. But the rubble itself was a useful object in itself as Bob banished the larger stone’s at the death eaters.

Harry thought the killing curse that shot rapidly between the two answered for him far better than he could.

The death eaters had decided to copy bob’s tactic as the killing curse shattered stone away from the wall, causing Harry to have to create a shield bubble to protect himself.

Getting an idea, Harry Summoned seven floating Protego balls and conjured a few bed spreads.

Taking each sheet, Harry placed one over each ball and mentally sent them out to bash against the Death eaters.

Immediately the spell fire ceased as they diverted their attention to the rapidly approaching sheets.

The large quick flying projectiles suitably confused the death eaters as they swarmed them.

Using the distraction, Harry took a quick glance and memorized the position of each death eater. Then, releasing the shield balls that had been pleasantly hammering away at his foes, Harry mined several Reductos around the still mostly bunched up group of death eaters.

Taking a deep breath, Harry turned around and while still maintaining the mined spells, jumped up and ran to a pew closer to Bob while firing... literally.

The death eaters scattered as jets of flame leaped at them.

One of the death Eaters took a wrong step and tripped... head first into a spell mine.

The man's scream was horrifyingly cut short as his head seemed to cave into itself. He fell to the floor, unmoving.

Bob disillusioned the priest and dragged him as he ran over to Harry under the new pew while adding his own blasting and percussion curses.

"That's enough Harry, take the Father and go; get as far away as you can, I'll hold them back." The man ordered as he cast some covering fire.

"Don't be dim..." Harry argued, while sending another jet of flame at the death eaters.

The man who had held the knife to the priest, the man who Harry had soaked in unknown liquids didn't get out of the way in time.

The man's screams echoed around the room as what appeared to be holy oils, caught fire and set the man aflame.

He apparently had never learned to stop, drop, and roll; instead he just ran around the room patting at his body fervently while trying to tear his burning clothes off himself.

Unfortunately during the man's frantic movements, he had run into a wall, layered in curtains that circled half the room, hanging from a wooden support beam.

Such a combination was not something the foam fire dog who had visited Harry during his kindergarten days to teach him the three F's of fire prevention, would recommend.

Harry could hear a pained gasp emanate out of the semi visible Priest, as he watched his church catch fire. Normally, Harry would have felt

some sympathy for the man, even guilt at the hand he had played in destroying the man's building, but he had other things to worry about.

"Can you make a Portkey...?" Harry asked.

Bob looked at Harry in confusion for a moment... then he snapped out of it and immediately picked up a piece of wood of the floor and waving his wand about it.

"It'll take a few minutes to make..." Bob warned as he waved his wand about the hunk of wood.

Harry wanted to argue, saying that he had watched Dumbledore make one in seconds, but didn't bother.

"Do it" Harry ordered, seemingly taking charge of the situation.

"Father," Harry addressed sternly.

The man turned frightened eyes toward Harry, "Y-yes..." he stuttered.

Putting on a more sympathetic frown, while wandlessly circulating pews around the death eaters and sending as many stunners and Reductos as he could.

"I know this is all very frightening, but I need you to do something, There are probably going to be a lot more people in black robes outside. The children and their families are in danger." Harry warned.

Immediately the man's eyes hardened, a purposeful fire sprung up within the man's stare. "I'll give my life for them..." the man said honestly.

Harry groaned to himself at the amount of suicidal people around him.

"Don't be stupid, if you get the chance, run, if you can - take as many people with you as possible until you can get help. Don't turn back." Harry ordered sternly.

The man looked like he wanted to tell Harry off, but he was interrupted as the pew they were all hiding behind vanished in an explosion of wood and splinters.

Harry was thrown Backwards, slamming with an enormous force against the metal gate to the baptismal chamber.

He collapsed on the floor in pain as he looked over to his wand arm and saw a piece of wood the size of a wand piercing his arm.

It went right through his forearm, as thick as his pinkie and as long as the palm of his hand; glistening with his blood. Fortunately he could still feel his fingers; unfortunately he could also feel the piece of wood rubbing painfully against his bone.

‘Always this arm...’ Harry mentally cried. He didn’t want to pull the wood out lest he bleed to death. Right now it wasn’t bleeding too badly, but he knew it would gush if the offending hunk of dead tree were removed. Harry tried to move his fingers to pick up his wand a few feet away.

He was stopped however on two fronts: the first being the fact it hurt too much to use that arm; the second being the feminine boot stepping on his holly friend.

Looking up, with a grimace of pain while he clung to his semi useless arm, he stared hatefully into the eyes of the smugly vengeful women.

“I must say Potter, I didn’t know you could put up such a fight... well done.” She congratulated.

“Go to hell!” Harry spat. He was surprised and worried to note that his spittle seemed a little more red than ordinary. He had probably sustained more injuries than he had realized.

“You first... Say hello to the mutt” she said back scornfully, while pointing her wand at Harry.

It sparked a sickly black in anticipation as she opened her mouth.

“Avada...”

She was stalled as a Rock bounced off her head.

Cupping her head in pain she looked over in the direction of the semi visible man who had thrown the stone

“The LORD is my shepherd;” The priest cried.

“I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures;” Taking another stone within his arm he tossed it with all his strength at the women.

“He leads me beside the still waters. He restores my soul;” The man cried, throwing a stone during each pause.

“He leads me in the paths of righteousness, For His name's sake.” Taking a piece of flaming wood that had once been the very pew that had protected Harry, He swung it at the women who ducked away from the flaming club.

“Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You are with me...” The man cried taking a swing with each breath.

Bellatrix having come uncomfortably close to being bludgeoned to death finally swung her wand arm in a slashing motion at the man.

The man watched as the sickly purple flame came his way, a content accepting smile upon his face, knowing the blow would mean death.

Bellatrix watched in surprise as the dark cutter rolled off a bright blue shield bubble that had encircled the man.

It made a clanging noise as the bubble vibrated and turned slightly green under the force of the spell before it shattered.

Bellatrix screeched in fury and turned to look incredulously at Harry who had used the distraction the man had provided him to retrieve his

wand in his left hand and had used a mixed wand/wandless spell to create a shield around the man.

The room was now entirely in flame, the walls were rolling with hellish ferocity. Beams cracked under the extreme heat and age. The building was groaning.

Harry and Bellatrix both turned to stare at each other before they realized they were missing one member of Harry's party. They both turned to look around the room.

The last two death eaters had died, or fled. The door to the church was open, fuelling the flames with fresh oxygen; the other Death eater, being crushed under a fallen beam.

The last person within the room was frantically working. The man in question swung his arm in a final circle while crying "Portus!"

Harry could feel the elation from the man as the piece of wood glowed blue.

He never had a chance to comprehend the fact though as in that moment, time slowed.

In the next few moments a cornucopia of events happened that left Harry feeling almost dizzy.

His mental powers kicked in to high gear and they swung back and forth between the occupants of the room.

First Bob...

It was as if Harry had been submerged in his consciousness. He had struggled to bypass the wards that the Death eaters had created. He was thankful that he had studied wards as a hobby; otherwise he would not have been able to create what he had.

Bob worried that Bellatrix would create a temporary booster object to strengthen the wards, preventing him from creating another portkey.

He hoped Harry would be able to escape. He hoped he would be able to survive.

Second the priest...

A wave of despair radiated off the man, as he watched his true home burn away under the assault of the women who he considered evil beyond reason. He was conflicted by the pair who were helping him survive. They were using the same tools as the women, they were using demonic powers. He reasoned though, the Lord would not have sent him the corrupt to save him; they were his guardians, through this ordeal. His mind focused however on the women... she was doing something, and he hoped it would not spell doom for him and his saviours.

Then Bellatrix...

'NO!' Bellatrix mentally cried in distress. Her mind was a twisted wreck. Her own voice repeating the voice repeatedly. Constantly cold, constantly in pain... she was truly insane from her stint in Azkaban.

But she was also intelligent, frightfully so.

She planned to create a booster, whatever that object was. But first she had to make sure Potter Died, he could not escape. He had to die.... Her Lord wished it.

The depraved twisted title of the snake man bounced around her head with awe and terror, but always in reverence. If Harry didn't know better Harry would have said the women loved the man, but it was a warped love, a love only the soulless could attain. It made Harry physically ill as he experienced it.

Then his mental powers lanced back to Bob.

'Now!'

Immediately, Bob's head swivelled up and he flung the piece of wood at Harry while swinging his wand up and pointing it at the piece of

wood and banishing it to give it that extra speed as it just barely missed Bellatrix's retaliatory Reducto.

Harry knew this would take him away upon contact.

Harry watched the world eerily as the room crumbled before him in slow motion. An ungodly groaning and crackling noise could be heard coming from the ceiling. Harry looked up and watched as the rickety old beam had had enough; it began to fall.

...With Bob Directly underneath.

Not bothering to even think about his actions Harry stuck out his injured arm, with the piece of wood still sticking out of his forearm, his palm out as if he was going to catch the projectile; but in actuality, for exactly the opposite reason.

Everyone watched in shock as Harry finally gave in to his powers, breaking the first wall he had held for himself.

Somewhere within himself he was regulating how much power he unleashed through his skills. It terrified him with how much power he truly had. He had set himself his own boundaries, levels he consciously and unconsciously erected preventing him from experiencing that source of power and strength, that potential he had always had in reserve.

Dipping into his magic like a man who had spent weeks in a desert, and had finally found an oasis; with all the force he could muster, he sent the strongest banisher at the portkey as he could.

A wave of force emanated out of his hand mere inches away from the portkey and caught the wood in its wake, flinging it back at the man that had thrown it. The fire and debris, every object in-between was caught in his desperate act, and they quaked under his power. The Flames receded back, the flaming debris crumbled under the strength, and the projectile that had meant to save him flung back at its creator at a speed that could have been deadly.

All Harry saw before the piece of wood pierced the man's shoulder from the force, was his wide incredulous eye's before he simply vanished.

Time returned to normal and Harry watched as the flaming beam fell right where Bob's head would have been with such force that Harry was sure the man would have died upon contact.

Satisfied Harry immediately turned his attention toward the priest and Bellatrix.

Bellatrix had a white object in her hands and she was preparing to throw it towards the priest.

Not thinking on what the object could be, Harry ran towards the priest, intent on saving him.

Using the same method as before, but encircling the man in a shield, Harry banished the priest through the flaming entrance way. Bellatrix's white object missed the man by inches but followed him outwards through doorway before the balcony, where Harry had just been staring down at a snowball fight, sealed the last exit as its support structure crumbled beneath it..

Harry suddenly realized just how hot the building really was. There was no spot along the walls that wasn't on fire. The roof itself was already starting to crumble down around them. Bellatrix Lestrange starring at Harry in furious worry.

"How did you do that Potter, you can't do two spells at once. Do you have a second wand...?" the women asked suspiciously.

"Wouldn't you like to know, Bella..." Harry spat teasingly.

If he was going to go out this way, he was going to make the women's last minutes on earth as uncomfortable as ever.

He idly wondered what was taking the order so long; 'they should have been here by now. Bob would have made sure of that.'

'Booster...' echoed across his mind in reminder.

The object Bellatrix had thrown... it wasn't meant to harm the priest, it was meant to trap Harry, and with it out there, and him in here... things did not look so good for him.

Bellatrix snarled as Harry called her by that name, a name only her Lord called her.

Flinging her wand out she started to fire spells; Harry reasoned they would be extremely painful.

Blocking those he recognized, and banishing objects in the way of those he didn't Harry began to truly duel the woman.

He was barely able to hold his own, as the woman was an excellent duellist. His wandless skill was the only thing keeping him from already having been skewered and beheaded by the first few spells.

The woman snarled insanely at the prospect that a boy would be able to match her. And through means she did not understand...

She sent an Avada at him while setting the floor on fire. Not caring that she was dooming herself in the process.

Harry dodged the Avada while summoning a piece of rubble to intercept it, but stumbled as he tried not to walk into the flames. Immediately Harry felt a giant force slam into his left shoulder which was temporarily acting as his wand arm. A large hunk of roof fell and slammed into Harry; knocking him down and his wand out of his hand.

Bellatrix smiled victoriously as the wand rolled away... The flames she had sent to the floor slowly spreading closer and closer to Harry.

Harry nervously tried to reach for it but was thrown back as Bellatrix spat a Disarmer at him. Having nothing left to disarm, the spell simply acted like a bludgeoner, having no wand to channel the magic into.

Harry wheezed as he could now clearly feel an uncomfortable stabbing sensation in his chest. One or more of his ribs were broken.

When no wand came, Bellatrix stared at the teen in confusion. Having bent over and picked up his wand.

Pointing both Wands at Harry, Harry was subjected to two disarmers being slammed into him. His wand seemed to shudder in the women's hands as if protesting such action but fired none the less. Harry was thrown bodily into the wall behind him and felt the fire licking at his clothing and scalding his hands. He coughed and watched as blood leaked out of his mouth.

"How did you fire two spells at once...?" The women demanded pointing both wands in Harry's direction; ready to cast another painful spell.

"I prayed to God really really hard..." Harry mocked.

The women grimaced in a very Snape like manner, before smiling evilly.

"I suppose it will remain a mystery then, Goodbye Harry Potter," the woman answered back in farewell. Both wand tips glowed a familiar green as the women enunciated the first syllables of the killing curse.

Harry's seeker eyes served him once more as he saw a burning large something falling from the ceiling.

Not giving it any thought, Harry wandlessly summoned the thing and using all his willpower dived out of the way just as the women uttered the last syllable. The spells struck the spot he was moments before, then the object struck the woman.

Harry who had only rolled a foot away was privileged to see the women's shocked face as her abdomen seemed to explode forward with large pointy splinters jutting out of her, before she crumpled onto the floor below.

Reaching over painfully and prying the wands out of the women's still firm grasp, as she stared at Harry Hatefully, Harry stood up and looked at the sight before him.

There before him lay the most feared women in the British Isles. Her lower half twitching uselessly. Her head twittering about madly as she tried to move. The fire was surrounding her and closing in.

Her hands and arms clawing at the burning stone trying to move away from the flames.

Embedded in her lower back was the once hanging cross, it stood slightly crooked but stood none the less. It had struck with such force that it had severed her spinal cord and destroyed most of her internal organs. It was a wonder she was even conscious, she probably couldn't even feel the pain from the injury having so many nerves severed.

"You'll Die Potter, There's no way out." The women screeched, bloody spittle flying vindictively from her mouth.

"I erected the ward boosters myself and flung the anchor outside with that useless muggle." She spat, confirming Harry's earlier realization.

"You'll die with me... Do you hear me?!" she cried insanely.

Harry looked down at the woman with no sympathy, she had earned her fate.

Looking about the collapsing room knowing that within moment's he would indeed die if he didn't get out Harry surveyed his options. Coughing slightly, from all the smoke Harry looked at the only source of light that wasn't coming from the fire.

The stained glass window shined down at him in unearthly majesty, calling at him.

"Oh I'm so going to hell..." Harry said aloud, as an idea sprang to mind.

Glancing down, Harry watched as the woman's legs started to catch fire. Her feet had stopped twitching uselessly as they were already charring.

"I'll see you there..." he addressed to the woman before turning his back on her and leapt over flames and rubble to the other end of the room.

Taking all the adrenalin and anger, the agitation and worry, the hatred and rage... Harry finally sent it at his core... the essence of himself that had been beating wildly through the entire ordeal.

Bellatrix who had pulled her body around watched in shock as Harry underwent the transformation.

The boy seemed to shimmer, and black smoke unrelated to the fire materialized around his shoulders before coalescing into an impossible shape.

This new smoke was sucked into his back and the teen's overcoat, or what remained of it, exploded outwards as with a snap, the black smoke gathered together and formed giant wings that twitched to life and flapped outwards blowing flames and debris away from him.

As he stared out at the, woman, his eyes flashed an unearthly white; for that moment Bellatrix was truly afraid.

Harry's Eyes dimmed back and his familiar jade eyes became visible once more.

Looking down at himself, Harry grumbled to himself.

"Damn it; that was my favourite jacket." Harry groaned sullenly as all that was left of his clothing was his sleeve where the piece of wood lay embedded, and part of his shirt underneath.

He was a little worried that he had not really felt anything from his pierced arm in a bit.

He cautiously poked at the wood and was comforted by the pain he felt. If only to indicate that he wouldn't have to get a hook and work his way up to moody's level of prosthetics.

Pointing his wand awkwardly at the wood, he carefully, with his unstable magic in mind, willed the wood to be carved down into manageable nubs that while still embedded in his arm, were at least not jutting out perpendicular to the skin.

Using his wand once more, using the spell Tonks Had shown his class the last day of school, Harry ran a diagnostic spell over his chest and frowned at the mental images that flashed in his mind.

He got glimpses of his internal organs, he could see a broken rib poking at a spongy bloody piece of flesh he assumed to be his lung.

Slightly queasy from bearing witness to what he was truly made of; Harry ended the spell as he felt his feet grow hot.

The flames were closing in; Harry could see Bellatrix's terrified eyes. For a moment he felt pity for the woman before snapping out of it, not willing to risk his life to save the woman who he had wished dead on more than one occasion. It was almost kinder to let her die as well, as Harry believed there was no way she would be able to live considering the damage the cross had done her.

Turning away, Harry reminded himself of what awaited him beyond the hellish church and flapped his wings.

The fire shot out radially away from his wake, before Harry started to gain altitude.

Not bothering to look below him as he started to hear the pained screams of his former enemy, Harry stared at the mural.

The ceiling above him was crumbling but not fast enough. Pointing his wand hand at the wall opposite him, while still flapping his wings; Harry prepared himself before firing off a percussion blast.

The force of the spell rocketed Harry forward toward the window, and with his wings wrapping around Harry's Body protectively like a shell as he closed the distance between him and the piece of art.

The last thing Harry saw before he exited was the accusing eyes of Mother Mary as he burst through her and her glass child, out into the snow storm. The fire escaping with him upon contact with the fresh source of oxygen.

Immediately spreading his wings, he could feel the air resistance tug at his appendages as he slowed his approach enough to land on the icy street below.

Harry could feel the sheet of ice below him crack from the force, and the only thing that kept him from breaking his bones from the fall being the air resistance and his strengthened muscles and bones.

Remembering the threat he was still in, his Head snapped up as he rolled just in time to miss a curse that would have missed him anyway.

Everyone was staring at him in Shock.

The Death eaters seemed frightened if the multiple steps away from him meant anything. Harry didn't even want to imagine what the church goers were thinking.

Using the shock to his advantage, Harry stood on one knee and using his wings for added support he pushed off the ground into a standing position. His wings immediately pointing behind him as he tried to make as thin a target as possible.

"Put your weapons away, and leave them alone." Harry ordered confidently, not letting on to the sheer terror that was still coursing through his veins.

Some of the Death eaters seemed to start at Harry's command, as if they were seriously considering it before another death eater who had admittedly taken a number of steps back himself, looked the most calm; took control.

"Don't give us orders Potter!" The man spat in false confidence.

“You will surrender or the hostages will die.” The man ordered. While aiming his wand at a group of children who had been separated from their parents.

Specifically, he had pointed his wand at a little girl who he had watched sing moments earlier.

The parents screamed in terror. The father fighting with other parents as they held him back with sorrow in their eyes.

Other parents were fighting as well but most were cowering in fear, supposedly knowing the truth of their powers as Harry had spotted the unseeing eyes of the cabby lying close to him and one or two men and women lying dead at the feet of the living.

This was not a child's game, and unlike when he was at the ministry, he had no prophecy to bargain with, the death eaters would kill indiscriminately...

...And they wouldn't even bat an eye in the process.

Harry could feel the two pieces of wood within his left hand. Separated only by a finger between the two, as if they were deadly chopsticks...

Harry watched the death eaters, staring them down and making them nervous.

A speck of ash floated down from the building beside them, the voice of Bellatrix Lestrange, no longer screaming in pain as she burnt away in flames.

He had an idea... he was not sure if it would work but he hoped it would. And he hoped he could control his wand enough to do it right. Otherwise he might be single-handedly responsible for a massacre, of Death eaters and muggles.

Franticly Harry looked at each person and tried to place each person within his mind like chess pieces on a wintry game board.

Luckily for him the muggle parents were well away from the death eaters, on the other side of the once proud church, to his left, but the children were uncomfortably close, not but a few meters away to his right.

The other death eaters were getting nervous and agitatedly pointing their wands at the parents seeing them as the bigger threat compared to the children. While the first death eater was nervously watching Harry, while keeping his wand pointed at the little girl who stared wide eyed at the end of the sparking wand that was glowing uncomfortably green.

Harry stared the man down, his hands preparing himself for the next set of actions.

The man watched with a critical eye.

Suddenly Harry's right fist twitched involuntarily, and the man snapped...

"Avada Kedavra!" He yelled while pointing his wand at the child.

Shocked, Harry, Immediately sent off another percussion blast behind him propelling him forward at a speed he had not been aware he was possible of reaching, while simultaneously accioing the girl into flight toward him.

With a speed that was impressive, the other death eaters swivelled their wands at the moving pair, and fired off Avadas as well.

Harry, noticing this, desperately while catching the girl and twirling her away in a hug with his left hand extended, summoned the ice sheet below him to crack away and raise up to shield himself and the girl.

Noticing the wide spray of green spell fire, He swung his wand in the direction of the other children as the first spell struck the ice barrier and shattered it.

Harry's wand acted instinctively and swirled and compressed the still falling snow in to crystal clear hard balls that intercepted each of the spells. Shattering upon contact, but saving the children's lives...

As the Avadas shattered the short lived shields, Harry whispered to the girl as he hugged her head to his shoulder.

"Close your eyes..." The girl clung to him in fright complying as Harry jumped through the shattered mist and raced towards the death eaters who instead of firing at the parents pointed their wands at Harry.

They were too slow.

Harry ran forward and using his left arm, Harry swung it in an arc at a death eater in range.

The super strengthened hand struck a fatal blow, flinging the death eater away in a uppercut like blow, snapping his neck instantly and flinging him a few feet away, unmoving.

Sensing the magic coming, Harry shielded himself as he ducked and rolled. With a protective arm around the girl, he just barely avoided a spell that shot right through another death eater like tissue paper; creating a puncture whole that was gruesomely visible to all.

Willing his Shield to grow, Harry blasted the protective shimmering ball outward in an explosion that took the closest death eaters by surprise.

Before anyone had time to deliver Harry the final Blow, Harry enacted his most harebrained and risky plan yet.

Grabbing a firm hold of his two wands, Harry took one last look around spotting the locations of the men and women and raised his left arm in an arc perpendicular to him; his wand pointing away purposefully while going through the motions of the spell within his mind.

Immediately the world around him exploded in a blurry mist that shot away from him as it coalesced into a translucent clear blob, making contact with each and every death eater and parts of the pavement below, a bubble at the centre with Harry and the child safely at the focal point. The blob seemed to pop and form a clear distinct shape around those involved... as Harry prepared himself for what he was about to do.

“Evertamens!” Harry cried.

The Death eaters stared in horror for a moment before the spell struck.

Then every death eater soundlessly screamed in pain as their bodies exploded outwards in a storm of black particles.

The black particles stopped and floated mid air for a moment as if asking Harry to reconsider.

Emotionlessly, Harry Flapped his wings powerfully and watched as the particles that had once been men and women Scattered in the wind amongst the white snow.

It was over, and he was alive... he had not expected that much even.

Harry’s knee’s wobbled from the backlash of so much magic interacting, his magical sensitivity making him feel physically sick from the spell. Adding on top of that the soundless cries of the men and women he had just killed... he was lucky to have not regurgitated his breakfast right there and then.

Looking around him, Harry took in the scene before him. There was a donut like depression around him where his spell had eaten away at the pavement. To his right directly behind him, were the rest of the children who were looking at him in awe not unlike meeting a comic book hero, not understanding how much blood dripped invisibly from his hands.

To his right were the parents with the same kind of awed gape. A particular set were staring at him in joy, or more particularly, staring at the girl within his arms.

Walking forward and jumping over the gap, Harry walked towards the pair.

Immediately the two ran forward toward their child. They reached out and took a hold of the little girl, who Harry let go thankful that the girl was not sitting on his injured forearm anymore.

“Honey, are you alright.... Honey, please look at me...” the mother said worriedly.

Looking at the girl, Harry smiled.

“You can open your eyes now...” Harry instructed.

Cautiously the girl opened one eye and peeked out.

“Where did the bad men go...?” She asked curiously.

“Away...” Harry answered her with a smile.

The parents looked at him in gratitude, uncomfortably so, Harry nodded sheepishly and turned away and let his eyes wander.

He spotted the priest, he was on his knees praying, occasionally opening his eyes and staring at Harry before renewing his prayers with vigour. Harry wasn't sure whether that was a good thing or not.

More than a few people were looking at him in a way that he was making him very uncomfortable. Turning away from the crowd Harry's eyes locked onto something a few feet by the entrance to the door.

He wouldn't have spotted it if it weren't for his unique sight. He could see movement along the surface, walking forward and cautiously picking up the death eater mask, Harry looked at the light runes that encircled the object.

Harry reasoned this was the ward booster that was preventing apparition and portkeys.

Harry idly wondered how the women had written them so fast and erected the shield so quickly but putting that thought aside, Harry wandlessly incinerated the object breaking the ward, after recalling his wings within him.

Almost immediately the sound of apparition filled the air as multiple wizards and witches popped in.

The crowd behind him cried in fear... but Harry immediately raced between the two groups and raised his good hand up in supplication.

“Don’t worry, they’re the good guys/” Harry eased. He barely had time to say anything further before he was tackled from behind by the obscenely strong Werewolf.

“Harry I was...”

“Broken ribs!” Harry wheezed.

Immediately the man let go and jumped aside as Molly Weasley ran forward with her wand extended running diagnostic spells about Harry and frowning in worry.

No one seemed to care that a group of muggles were watching enraptured at the group of strangely dressed but imposing figures who were tending to the boy who had saved them and their children’s lives.

Molly let out a cry of horror as she took in Harry’s wound on his arm, drawing many eyes to the wooden stubs that had driven itself through the arm.

Dumbledore walked forward, with wand extended while pointing in general directions getting order members to go secure the area before making his way to Harry.

“Harry, are you alright?” The man asked worriedly.

Harry was about to answer when he was blinded by a flash that was only intensified by the white snow.

Looking up at the building opposite the church Harry stared at a man with a camera in his hands.

Looking around him, Harry saw more people staring out their windows with other damning recording devices and telephones focused solely on Harry and the wizards.

Looking around himself Harry finally spotted the other pieces of equipment.

On the snow, littered around them, Harry could see the Video cameras with their infernal red lights lit as they recorded at specific angles.

“Oh, shit.” Harry whispered to himself... just as a siren emanated around the corner and wizards started to come forward warning the headmaster that muggles were coming.

No one reprimanded him for his language as the first of multiple police cars pulled in; just as Dumbledore slipped him a portkey and Harry was whisked away wondering how much trouble this was going to bring.

AN: Well there you go, that's the scene, total exposure. Harry has just battled death eaters, all with the video cameras rolling. He has revealed secrets only a handful of people are aware of.

I'm tired and I'm going to go to bed, as this chapter was incredibly long and difficult to write.

I basically stuck to my outline, but I had to make some changes here and there to suit the story.

Some of you might note the differences in the evertamens spell from how it was shown earlier... that was on purpose, and there is a reason. I'm just too lazy to write it out now. Anyone who really wants to

know can ask in their review, and I'll copy and paste an explanation onto the reply I give.

Anyway, I look forward to hearing your opinions, till next time.

Quazi

February 13 1996 – 7:38 pm

‘Boy’s!’ I mentally cried in resignation.

I looked around the dinner tables and frowned at all the students. It was pathetic really.

They were all so giddy and happy, completely ignorant of the world around them. At this very moment, people are suffering, Death eaters may even be attacking and all they can do is gawk at the opposite sex.

It was nauseating, really. I mean, look at Harry. Not even a year ago he had to fight for his life in a grave yard, and now he’s going all gooey eyed over Cedric Diggory’s old girlfriend.

The Slag.

Doesn’t she have any decency? ...I mean, really!

I’ve heard the rumours; she cries every night, she still mourns his death...

If that’s so, how can she even consider...? It’s despicable!

She’s so obviously using Harry.

...And Harry, the poor confused boy; doesn’t even realize it. He’s completely smitten by her looks and popularity.

‘Oh no, I chipped a nail... woe is me!’ I mentally cry in faux-anguish; I roll my eyes, making a staring Ron blush crimson as he looks away.

I have no idea why he’s blushing... probably something to do with quidditch... or food... or both... that boy only has two modes.

I glance away from my eating companions. My transfiguration textbook drops slightly as my eyes wander the great hall. I’m determined to not let all these... valentine vipers, ruin my Hogsmead trip.

It's been hard though... ever since Grimauld place, knowing that the truth was being covered up... The system is utterly flawed.

Look at all those articles, in the Daily Prophet discrediting Harry.

I turn and look up at the Staff table...

That... thing!

I watch as the cheery smile on her flabby face beams around the room as she stuffs her mouth with chicken... The air of sophistication and propriety hiding her true nature... that of a leech, draining life's blood unnoticed from the people around her.

If there was only a way too...

"Don't forget to salt your fork..." A cheery voice interrupts my thoughts.

I turn around in a foul mood and watch as a blonde smiles at me dreamily before wandering away.

I want to comment but she's already gone; at a speed that is unnatural for someone who I am watching walk away so slowly.

What was I thinking about before...?

Damn it all!

That girl will drive me insane... And why is she suddenly so chummy with us this year... Harry doesn't seem to mind. Although I don't think he would mind if the giant Squid offered to play him a good old fashioned game of backgammon. He's been so out of it lately. Luna Lovegood would barely faze him.

Really, though, why is it suddenly this year that she decides to bother us?

Snorkacks and conspiracies... It's understandable I suppose if her father is the one who runs the

Her father...

If I... but then who would... It couldn't possibly...

Memories of ghastly horned glasses and a poisonous looking quill flashed across my mind.

The year was going to be up soon... I might... it could work...

But it's the Quibbler...

I realize I've already begun my trek to the Owlery... I'm exiting the great hall doors even now. I idly wonder if Ron or Harry have even noticed.

With one so focused on his food and sports, and the other pining over that pampered little Ravenclaw... it was unlikely.

I found my self soon entering the Owlery...

"Hedwig!" I cried out loud.

The owl immediately swooped down, curious to what I needed.

It is odd to have an owl respond to anyone but its owner. But Hedwig is an unusual bird. She seems to be the mirror image of what Harry is experiencing. If Harry is sad, the bird is lethargic... if Harry is happy, the bird is energetic.

If Harry is angry... I tried not to wince at the memory of the birds pecking when I tried to explain to it that I couldn't write to Harry.

Harry was clearly in an okay mood as Hedwig was responding to my voice as quickly as she was.

"I need to send a letter to Rita Skeeter..."

HOOO

At hearing that name, the bird spread its wings in a threatening manner and hooted in a very predatory way. Apparently the bird had the same opinion of the woman that Harry had.

“No, its okay, I’m going to use her to help Harry...” I immediately answered back. It’s always strange trying to explain myself to the bird. I can never get a clear answer about the intelligence of the mail owls. Are they just a domesticated breed of bird that wizards have tamed, or are they truly intelligent? Did they understand my inflections and emotions like any other person? All the books I have found were vague, telling owners to treat their owls with respect, almost a word for word description of how to treat your wand, or your broom, or your plants... it was nauseating at best to try and figure out.

Hedwig calmed down a little, but it was still wary of my request.

Taking that as an acceptance, I walk over to the podium and pull a sheet of paper and quill out.

Note to self: Buy more self inking quills.

The one I am using at the moment is on its last leg. I swear I should just grab a handful of pens from home and bring them with me.

Dear Rita,

I consider scratching that out, it feels so wrong to refer to her as dear anything...

In case you had assumed, I am not Harry Potter. I am Hermione Granger.

I could just imagine her outrage. There was a reason why I wanted to use Hedwig instead of a school owl. Harry’s owl was practically a celebrity in its own right. Any self respecting journalist knew that Harry Potter owned a Snowy owl. Something that was rare to find around the area.

The woman would probably open the letter hoping to stash away whatever little tid-bits she could till after our agreement had ended.

Ms. Skeeter had stopped responding to my Owls... I had been sending little warnings here and there reminding her that I could reveal her secret if she broke our agreement... I'm guessing it wasn't as amusing for her as it was for me.

Now before you toss the letter aside like I know you want to, I am offering you a one time interview with Harry Potter himself... an exclusive face to face.

Interested?

I supposed I should have probably told Harry about this before hand, but he would understand. If I had stopped to ask him he would probably refuse... letting his pride get in the way, but once he sees how much good it will bring, he'll be thanking me.

Meet me tomorrow in Hogsmead, everything will be explained at that time.

I stop and look over my wording... I pause at the tomorrow bit.

Harry has a date planned for tomorrow... He's been so excited and nervous and...

Images of the boy's sappy smile and the cheery visage of the girl who should have been mourning burned me from the inside.

Her perfect hair... that exotic appeal...

I looked down at my own hands... there were ink smudges on my un-manicured hands... my hair was in a particularly unpleasant mood today...

A vindictive surge sprung up within me... I didn't like the comparison.

In my own mind, I would always be that bushy headed bucktooth.

The letter was fine as it was.

Really if Harry cared more about a silly little date, on a silly little day, than exposing the truth... then he was the one with the problem.

I have my priorities straight.

I ignore Hedwig's suspicious glare as she eyes the letter and me.

Tomorrow... didn't seem so bad after all.

... ..

April 5 1996 - 9:30 PM

It's a constant Battle, I feel so tired. I just want to fall down and never get up.

But I have to stay awake, I have a responsibility...

I...

YAWN

Curses...

I am currently walking the halls flogging myself internally for giving into my sleep deprived whims.

Ron, being the git he is, talked his way out of doing the patrols. It's a wonder that he even became a prefect, I sometimes wonder who actually decides who gets these duties. I mean if it was the heads, then that would explain Malfoy's placement... the insufferable twit probably brown nosed his way into the position.

But I don't think McGonagall would have let Ron be a prefect... there goes that theory.

If it was Dumbledore though... but then again, how does that explain Malfoy? Oh this is so going to bug me...

I should use Harry's map, I wouldn't even have to leave the common room... that's actually not a bad idea.

I hear some footsteps... turning a corner, I see a figure walking towards me.

I square my shoulders and prepare my most disapproving glare on my face...

I'm about to tell the student off for being out so late, when she steps out into the light.

"Hello Hermione..." Cho smiles at me in greeting.

"Good evening Cho..." I reply back. I forgot that the Ravenclaws and Gryffindors patrol the castle on Sundays.

"Are you alone as well...?" She asks.

"I am, where's your partner...?" I ask. I want to be terse with her, but she's never really been all that rude to me... though she does grate on my nerves.

"Oh Roger's left early, he has a tendency to spell check his essays the night before they're due... I told him I'd finish our patrol." Cho explained.

I realized that we were walking side by side down a corridor. We were approaching the stairwell with the moving staircases...

"You really shouldn't let him... it's his responsibility to patrol... he should be doing his homework on his own time." I lecture.

Cho gives me a look, it's a little amused and understanding. "I see you've read our patrol protocol guide..." she remarked with a smile as we stopped by the staircase. We were waiting for a stairway to become available for us; the other stairways were currently in transit as they switched to different banisters and ledges.

"I did..." I answer proudly. It was a surprisingly long book considering all it was, was rules and procedures.

"It's your first year as a prefect, I remember what it was like for me the first time... you'll realize soon enough that this is only an excuse for the teachers to get some rest from dealing with the students. Besides, now Davies's owes me a favour..." She answered back with a wink and a smile.

I give her a half smile though I'm still disapproving.

"Davies's, he's the one who asked you out on a date...?" I ask as the name finally rings a bell within my memories.

Cho's eyes locked on mine and I could clearly see that she was embarrassed.

"I see, Harry told you about that..." she stated rhetorically as her cheeks flamed.

I felt my footing solidify as I regained the upper hand. There was little doubt but that Cho was going to be the next head girl so arguing with her would be... well bad; but I wanted to show her that I am not some naïve little girl. She had to realize I was not one to be trifled with... especially when it comes to Harry.

"Harry tells me everything... we've been friends since first year" I answer back significantly.

I didn't want the girl thinking just because she was dating the boy, that she could replace me in Harry's life. She had to understand that we were always going to be friends; we had a history that she just didn't have.

Something in Cho's eyes changed and I could see that she received my warning.

Cho continued to stare at me with a friendly smile, but it was less genuine now, more forced.

“Well I suppose I can understand that, though I had hoped Harry would have kept that private.” Cho replied back in false understanding. “That day was not exactly either of our best moments...” She explained in supplication.

“What do you mean?” I asked. I knew exactly what the girl meant, but I wanted her to spell it out.

“Well, making other plans during our date... it wasn’t the most appropriate thing, but I can understand in hindsight.” Cho answered back.

Everything out of her mouth sounded so innocent, she took just enough blame that I couldn’t find any reasonable fault with her, but I knew what she was really thinking... I knew what kind of girl she truly was.

“Well it was unfortunate... but there was no helping it at the time.” I answered back in false sympathy.

I revelled in the fact that I had taken the girl by surprise by my response. She had assumed I would be sorry for her; that I would sympathise with her troubled relationship... she had not expected me to be unrepentant.

She gave me piercing stare... something within her mind clicking into place.

“It’s... odd.” She commented.

“What?” I asked, taking the bait as I was curious as to what she could be thinking.

“Harry is adorably absent minded about certain things, but he would never intentionally set an interview on our date... he’s never really given any intentional interviews before if I have my facts straight...” Cho remarked cautiously.

“He gave Rita Skeeter the interview last year...” I pointed out.

“That wasn’t an interview... anyone who knows Harry knows that that entire article was more fiction than fact. The only thing Rita Skeeter talked about the year before was Harry and you... And then she stopped.” Cho stated.

I didn’t answer, waiting to see where the girl would take this. We had reached an intersection. Behind me, the path to Ravenclaw tower, behind her, Gryffindor.

“There have been odd rumours going around... about Skeeter specifically. Malfoy has been gloating about it quite a bit.” Cho hinted.

I froze... Surely Malfoy wasn’t that stupid. But then again, what did he care... he wasn’t at risk, with his father pulling the strings from the side, he was practically untouchable.

Skeeter wouldn’t have been stupid enough to transform in front of Malfoy, but he must have suspected the truth.

I had specifically trapped Rita in the bottle and forced her to transform in front of me, when I was home.

With the wizards monitoring magic in muggle neighbourhoods she couldn’t touch me, and with the order standing guard, I was doubly safe.

It was one thing to have a theory, but to have a pensieve memory was another matter entirely. The ministry probably suspected, but they had no one to bear witness to a transformation, and with Rita’s clout... it would have been disastrous if they were wrong.

“What rumours...?” I asked.

“That she has other ways of getting about unseen. That she could sneak past anyone. That she could be the proverbial ‘fly’ upon the wall, for any conversation...” Cho hinted.

“She could have easily come into the castle to get an interview at anytime...”

She knew. Not just about Skeeter's secret, but about why it was that specific day as well.

The question was, what was she going to do about it?

"Those are still rumours though; you can't really base anything off those..." I answered reasonably. I don't know why I was feeling nervous, but I didn't want someone to figure it out. I didn't want the shame of being "that girl"... the clingy girl who hung around celebrities and meddling in their lives to suit her idealistic world.

I was uncomfortable enough knowing what I had done.

"Of course... but I'm just saying, there's a time and a place for everything... Harry's interview was very important; there was no doubt about it. But the timing was all wrong. It would give people ideas..."

"What kind of idea's...?" I asked challenging her to say it.

"Oh the crazy kind of idea... the stuff only Rita Skeeter would have 'written' about." Cho said with a friendly smile.

"Anyway, I need to go, I want to get enough sleep for tomorrow, I think I finally mastered my Patronus charm, I can't wait to show Harry in the D.A." Cho said with a bright smile, throwing me off completely. There was a clear warning laced in that smile now.

I was very wary of the girl... she knew things that I didn't even want to admit to myself. I didn't like that.

"Till tomorrow Hermione... Sleep well." Cho said in farewell as she gracefully passed by me and exited the scene.

All I could do now was gaze down the corridor that the girl had just exited. Her voice, echoing around in my mind...

"There's a time and a place for everything..."

In my own, mind the voice added... "Even you..."

... ..

August 9 1996 - 2:46 pm

'5, 10, 12... 12 Galleons, 4 Sickles, and 2 Knuts.' I counted out in resignation.

I was a Galleon and 2 Sickles short. I really wished my parents hadn't set a spending limit on my Gringotts account. I'm not eleven anymore... I wasn't about to go spending it all on whatever caught my fancy.

I was only allowed 10 Galleons a month, plus an additional amount for school supplies. Gringotts had set up the system in coordination with Hogwarts so the exact amount for the supplies was always allotted to the student as there were never set amounts per year.

Especially considering the changing teachers and what books they deemed necessary.

All I wanted was a book; for school even. Just because it wasn't listed as necessary or recommended by the teachers, doesn't mean I should be denied it.

Just this morning, I had finally received my own O.W.L. results.

O's all around. I was quite pleased. Though, the percentage's added on were another matter all together.

With my O.W.L. result, I had also convinced an unsuspecting Tonks to tell me Harry's score's down to the percentages. That was where the issues had begun.

Harry, bless him, was not what I would have considered a genius. He was smart, about that there was no question, and when he was determined-nothing would stop him... but intellectually...

He needed my help; there was no denying it. He would gladly coast by on the bare minimum if only because he could. Ron has been a poor influence on him from the beginning.

But if that was so... how did that explain our respective grades.

He had not done as well as I had, receiving a Troll even, though that was for divinations...

But he had done exceedingly well. Going so far as to beat me, in not one, but two courses.

I have never been strong in Defence, and I knew that Harry was just naturally skilled in the subject. I could accept his bettering me in that one area, even if I still strived to beat him.

But Transfiguration! Oh there was something wrong there. We had scored identically for the practical, but he had a solid four percent lead on the written.

I wondered if I was slipping, if my Transfiguration was suffering... did I need more help, could I get tutoring...? Some might say that I was needlessly worrying, but they didn't understand.

Transfiguration was my subject. It was as much mine as Defence was Harry's or Herbology was Neville's. This was my forte. If someone were to ask who to go to for help in transfiguration, they would not give the name of some seventh year, or even the teacher... the first person to come to mind should have been me.

Maybe that was an exaggeration but I didn't care. I needed help...

Within my hands, I held the only such help I could possibly find.

Transfiguration: A guide to advanced sorcery

It was the new book by Rosetta Stanton. She was a prodigy in the field.

If she said that the only way to transfigure a rock into a mountain was to dance around with a plucked chicken while reciting a recipe to bake cookies...then that was the only way to do it.

If I could master this book, there would be no question about who was the superior transfigurer... But I had to buy the book first.

Looking up, I turned my head to spot my shopping companions.

Tonks was waiting outside, acting immature as she claimed that she had spent enough time in the bookstore the day before.

To my right, near the back wall stood Ginny and Luna.

Luna was perusing an odd assortment of books. All day she had only bought what she needed for school, nothing more, and nothing less. She clearly had been interested in other purchases as she spotted other objects that she studied from gadgets to books, but she would only admire them before moving on, never to look again.

At first I had assumed that maybe money was tight for her and her father... but then I had a glance at the contents of her money bag. A tight budget was not the case if the amount of gold inside was any indication.

She wasn't carrying around a small fortune, but she certainly had enough to indulge herself.

I assumed she was saving for something.

Ginny had been a bit less strict in her spending, having pocket change to actually buy new things, she had been in heaven throughout the day.

She had confided that she was going to save up her change for an extravagant item of clothing. Wanting to show up Parkinson and a few select Slytherins who had been hassling her for years.

I could understand that. The same urge had plagued me for quite some time, and I did indulge every now and then but I figured she

was my best bet. I couldn't really ask Luna, while she was the one with the most galleons on her, she was also the one I could least call a friend.

She was friendly with me, and after spending a few weeks with the girl in our suite, I had gotten used to her odd tendencies to the point where it barely affected me, but I would call her a frequent acquaintance or a peer rather than a pal.

Making up my mind, I walked toward the pair.

Tilting her head, Ginny spotted me out of the corner of her eye. Shutting a book on... Advanced potions? What was she doing with advanced potions? No matter... I had to focus on what I wanted.

"Hi Hermione, you all set?" Ginny asked as she tucked the book into her caldron with her other purchases. I had not realized that Ginny was good at potions, especially considering the teacher. I would have thought Snape would have ground out any hope the girl might have had by the end of her first day.

"Almost, I was wondering though...do you want to go in on a book together, I'll pay for most of it, I just need a Galleon and 2 Knuts..." I asked with an excited smile while raising the book up to eye level.

Ginny's eyes tracked my hand and she grimaced as she read the subject.

"Sorry Hermione, but I'm saving up for that dress, I'm sure Madame Pince will have a copy or McGonagall even. The library's fairly up-to-date." Ginny commented unsympathetically.

"But you know how Madame Pince is about the new books; I won't be able to take it out of the library for at least three months. Besides I'm sure your mother would approve, I'll even help you in the subject for your transfiguration Owl..." I offer hopefully.

Ginny gives me an amused but pitying smile.

“You’re going to help me whether I want it or not Hermione...” the girl said in amusement.

“Sorry, but I can’t pass up the chance at showing up that uppity Slytherin trollop in Potions....” Ginny apologized.

I wanted to try to convince her further but she was already heading to the register. Tonks was cheering soundlessly outside at the first of the three to leave the bookstore. She went so far as to spell out the word ‘applause’ in ribbons from her wand while she clapped outside; nodding in ridiculous approval.

I sighed in defeat. I had really wanted that book, I suppose I could hint to my parents that I wanted it for my birthday, but we had already agreed that my birthday money would be used for tutoring the summer after.

Money wasn’t tight, but my Hogwarts education did eat up quite a bit of their pay. They wanted to make sure that once I graduated Hogwarts I would still know the fundamentals of Math and English that I had missed out on. I suppose it was helpful, but I didn’t see the use, working in the muggle world after learning magic seemed ridiculous, I wanted to be fully submerged into the wizarding world. Only then would the purebloods even consider showing me any respect, they would never talk to anyone who was an in-between, I had read the papers, articles subtly condemning greedy muggleborns for learning their skills and leaving the wizarding world, never to contribute to society... that wasn’t going to be me... not for what I had planned.

What I needed now was...

“Here you go Hermione...”

Feeling my thought process being derailed by the sudden bombardment of noise, I turned my head around to spot the source.

Directly behind me, stood Luna Lovegood with an unfocused stare, small friendly smile, and some gold and silver in the palm of her hand extended towards me.

I stared at the girl dumbly... 'Was she ...?'

"A galleon and 2 Knuts, right?" she asked.

"Eh, yea... I mean thank you; but are you sure?" I asked somewhat reluctant to take the money, as it felt odd.

It was one thing to ask Ginny, she was as close a thing to a female friend I would have in the wizarding world, with all the time we had spent together at the burrow, and at Hogwarts... we were practically girlfriends, though I would never call ourselves that. But to ask Luna was tantamount to asking a stranger... it felt wrong.

"It's no problem, though I wouldn't say no if I could borrow the book every now and then..." She offered with a smile with her hand outstretched still in offering.

I took some comfort in her unintentional compromise; I could turn it into a business arrangement, a deal with her terms. Now she got something out of it as well... With a more relaxed smile, I reached out and grasped the change from her hand.

She smiled at me and lifted up her cauldron ready to pay.

I returned the smile, warming up to the girl slightly for coming to my aid in my hour of need.

I reached the register first and plopped my books down and reached for my change purse.

Emptying the contents of the purse on the scale it came to the exact amount with Luna's contribution completing the purchase.

I took the now empty change purse and fiddled with the string as I tried to tie it to my jean belt loops.

I couldn't understand how I could knit but couldn't get the accursed string through a loop... for some reason I have always had trouble with knots... I have no idea why...

"Anything else dear...?" the man at the register asked. I recognized the man from previous trips... usually he was quite harassed and grumpy, I was surprised that he was being as friendly with me as he was... maybe it was because he respected my purchases.

Looking up I was about to answer, when someone else did.

"No thank you Mr. Heiss. How have you been?" a cheery voice replied. To my left Luna stared at the man with a respectful friendly smile as she heaved the cauldron on the table.

"Oh I can't complain, but I've been hoping you would show up..." The man said in mysterious excitement.

Luna stared at the man in curious dreaminess as she listened to him.

"I just received a limited edition set of journals from Brussels... They're not supposed to be released for sale until tomorrow, but... I won't tell if you don't." the man winked conspiratorially.

"Our usual price..." he said fondly as he watched the girl become excited.

Luna's eyes focused on the man in a way that I had rarely seen her do... She nodded emphatically while looking down into her change purse... Fiddling a finger about, she frowned in confusion, and then resignation.

"I don't have enough on me... can you put it on layaway...?" She asked hopefully.

The man frowned himself. "I'm afraid I can't, the journals are tied directly to the register and I'm not allowed to withhold them from any who are approved. And I know for a fact Mr. Montgomery will be in bright and early tomorrow to purchase the lot for his department." The man said sadly.

Luna sighed but put on a smile none the less. "Well thank you anyway, maybe next time." Luna said in her normal dreamy tones.

The man looked disappointed; I didn't think he was sad that he didn't make the sale but more for denying the girl the journal...

Looking about, and not spotting anyone watching except me. He spared me a glance before smiling at me, acknowledging my presence for the first time with a wink.

Reaching into his own pocket, he pulled out his own money bag, and pulled out a stack of coins and placed them on the scale. While hitting a button on the register.

There was a clinging noise and clack from below indicating a latch releasing.

Luna watched unbelieving... not willing to comprehend what the man was doing.

The man reached down and pulled out a black notebook with a black glossy finish and a red elastic threaded strap around the end keeping the book shut.

He slid the book over the counter with a smile...

"Pay me back when you can..." the man offered with a genial smile.

Luna nodded dumbly while gently reaching out and taking hold of the book.

My eyes followed her hand and I caught a glimpse of the gold embossed title.

The 1923 Node study: A recreation of the Gleimen/Heibetz process.

Findings

'That couldn't be... Surely Luna didn't just receive... It was impossible!'

Luna proceeded to thank the man non-stop while tucking the purchases away safely. The man waved it off as if it was nothing and asked her to come back soon.

He nodded at me and winked at me once more assuming that Luna and I were close friends.

I smiled at him and followed Luna out of the building.

Ginny and Tonk's were up ahead, speeding towards their next purchases. I hung back with Luna... wanting to confirm the importance of what I had just seen.

"Um... Luna..."

She tilted her head to the right a little and looked at me inquisitively.

"Was that a... the journal you bought, is that a..."

"An Unspeakable's results journal that was recently released for publication?" She asked in confirmation.

I stared at the girl not quite believing that it was true...

"But how..." I asked, it was baffling.

Luna stared at me for a moment, contemplating her answer...

Looking ahead, the girl casually said.

"My mom was a good customer for Mr. Heiss. When the ministry wanted to seize her private library, Mr. Heiss helped Daddy keep them from doing so. As a result, we were added on to the hereditary clause." Luna answered airily, as if she was commenting on the weather.

I stared at her completely gob smacked.

I had come across the hereditary clause. Specific pureblood families, who had pioneered certain inventions or contributed to the study of

magic, were exempt from Ministry bans and regulation of books. They had unfettered access to any and all articles that normally only the unspeakable's were privileged to possess.

There were some exceptions but anything that could be distributed was fair game under the clause. The fact that Luna's mother even had a private library must have meant she was an unspeakable or something similar.

Luckily the list of people who were included under the clause were short and few... most of the families having died out or had criminal records denying them the rights provided by the clause, but it was practically unheard of to be included into the clause.

The book that sat innocently between her charms book and her potions text was worth its weight in gold... times 10.

"I like to add to the library now and then, I don't pretend to understand most of it, but I try to read the articles. My mum liked to collect the journals... she said it was a record of Progress, that it showed how society advanced in its understanding of the world around us and where we fit in to things..." Luna commented airily.

My opinion of the girl involuntarily rose just that much more...this was not what I had expected, from Luna Lovegood of all people.

"Daddy was worried the minister would try and send Heliopaths to burn down the library so he spent quite a few weeks after, warding the library against fires."

That however, was what I had expected...

Who was I kidding; the department of mysteries probably wanted the Quibbler to print whatever it was they were doing. The truth of what they were doing was probably tamer than the conspiracies the Quibbler concocted.

Either way, there was more to Luna than I had suspected... I would have to keep an eye on the girl this year.

... ..

November 15 1996 – 6:37 pm

‘The excavation spell was created in 1322 by Ulrich of the northern isles. When done correctly mines and tunnels can be dug at speeds fast enough to super heat the tunnel walls; forcing the tunnels to melt and solidify into a glossy finish. Often times into marble or glass depending on the sediment being dug.... Ulrich developed the... the...’

Was it 1322 or was it 1233? I wish I hadn’t lent my notes out to Lavender... I know the answers were in them.

I grumble to myself and rolled over in bed as I stare up at the canopy in frustration... things were not going the way I had hoped.

Harry was distancing himself from me. He had even admitted it. He had actually only admitted to keeping secrets... which was damning in itself, but he had never denied the other allegations.

Of course that was just before he had had a bout of powerful accidental magic. Normally wizards and witches should have outgrown the small manifestations by third year... I had read multiple theories on accidental magic, and they all agree that a person by the age of 13 or 14, should have developed enough self control to stop if not minimize those instances.

Harry’s outburst was both contrary to all that I had read, and frightening to observe.

His eyes, the scowl, the voice... I had never truly been afraid of my friend ever before. I had been upset because of him... I had been moved by his hard life... I had even taken up his unwilling cause; going so far as to battle death eaters by his side. But through all of those events and moments of despair; I had never feared him.

I didn’t like the fact that I was afraid of him now. It felt like I had become submissive, like he had become some masochist, deeming

me meek and unworthy. The mere thought that he could dominate me through intimidation had set a fire ablaze within me.

He could not and would not succeed. I was no one's inferior.

I felt my features twist into a scowl of frustration. That was all good and dandy... I could proclaim those goals all I wanted... but how was I to follow through?

I needed to prove to him... to destroy any seed within his mind that would proclaim such a thing. Normally I could just fall back upon my grades, as they were always top notch, but Harry was quickly catching up to my level, if not surpassing it.

I felt it was unfair, as I firmly believed that Snape had been telling the truth. Harry was getting training. If that was so... then of course his other school work must have become easier. I had no qualms with Harry receiving training in itself. The boy needed whatever advantage he could get when he faced his next challenge. Which I was sure was coming.

No the problem I had was the fact that Ron and I had not been included.

Were we not always 'there' by his side?

Did we not always 'fight' with him?

Have we not always 'risked our lives' for him?

Surely whatever training he was receiving would be beneficial for us as well.

I'm sure I could have handled it... I mean I spent most of my third year traveling back and forth through time to attend classes... it was taxing but I still did it. Surely they could see that I could handle the load. Ron might not have been able to handle it, but I'm sure he would have given it a go...

I huffed in frustration and rolled onto my feet off the bed. My essay wasn't going to be finished today.

Deciding that I needed a nice long bath I decided to head to the prefects bath... going to my dresser, I dug inside for my personal towel, and another set of socks... I always got the one's I was wearing wet no matter what I tried.

Closing the drawer and locking my drapes around my bed with a locking charm to keep my homework safe from wandering eye's... I exited the dorm.

Taking the spiral staircase down... I frowned as I heard an odd thumping noise.

Leaving the staircase on the 5th year landing, I wandered over to the door and heard the odd noise some more.

Was someone throwing something? As a Prefect I should probably investigate... It wouldn't do for someone to make a mess and damage the furniture.

Putting on my Prefect pose... I took a moment before knocking and opening the door.

Immediately I had to duck as a book soared at my head.

"Oh, I'm so sorry!" A familiar voice cried in fright as she watched me duck the errant potions text.

Looking up and letting my scowl lessen at the repentant tones I stared at the red head.

"Is there a reason, you felt the book needed to be used to bludgeon me?" I asked in terse sympathy.

Anyone else and I would have had them written down for points and a possible detention. Ginny was lucky I liked her.

I looked about the room and took in the scene about me.

Ginny was the only one around, on her desk by her dresser sat a Cauldron that was bubbling a grey sludge.

Other knick-knacks lay strewn about the floor having been thrown or dropped. I was guessing the former.

Ginny blushed red and sighed as she sat on her bed in defeat.

"I'm sorry..." she said in distress as she refused to look at me. I felt my heart reach out to the girl, my strings being pulled just right as I walked forward to kneel beside the girl.

"What's wrong Ginny?" I asked in comfort. I placed my hand on her own... if only to remind her that I was there...

The girl sighed sadly... tiredness and despair seeped off her tiny frame.

"I keep screwing up...I can't seem to do anything right nowadays." she said in defeat.

I sensed we were talking about more than potions...

Unsure why I was asking this... maybe it was the notable absence of the girl from the dining hall, DA, and common room, or my own intuition... but I wondered whether our problems had stemmed from the same source.

"Does this have to do with Harry?" I asked.

The wide eye's and startled look were all I needed to know that I was right.

I found my anger for the boy growing. He was probably doing the same thing he was doing to me, to Ginny. I was all too aware of Ginny's affections... Harry was causing her added pain from the rejection.

She had never truly gotten over her crush for Harry. Last year, I had advised her to play it cool and be aloof. I was sure that once Harry realized that Ginny was no longer an option he would realize he had feelings for her as well.

She was my only exception in my long term plans. It would have been ideal if Harry married a muggleborn like me, but Ginny truly felt for him and I had warmed up to her over the years. If anything she was like the sister I never realized I wanted. I wanted her to be happy, and it broke my heart that she was feeling pain and rejection.

"How did you..." Ginny asked.

"Lucky guess. Listen Ginny; don't worry about it one bit. Harry's been acting like a pig these last few days. He's trying to push us away..." I said significantly.

"No but... It was my fault I shouldn't have pried I ..." Ginny tried to take the blame.

That was so sweet of her. Harry had truly worked her over if he had convinced her that she was the one at fault.

"Let me guess, he gave you a speech about his privacy... about how he needed his space...?" I asked.

"The fact of the matter is, he's up to something dangerous and he doesn't want us around to stop him... because he knows we can talk him out of it." I said in comfort.

Ginny gave me a look. She was thinking it through... I had clearly struck a chord but she was having doubts...

"Have you noticed he has been acting different lately...?" I asked trying to get Ginny to piece together the information for herself.

"Well he did give up quidditch... and he loves quidditch... and he has a weird fixation with Luna. I don't remember him ever showing any interest in the girl before..." Ginny said suspiciously.

She raised a good point... not on the Luna bit, but the quidditch angle. I was biased and had never really paid it any mind, but it was true... Harry easily gave up quidditch. He claimed to need the time to study potions, but he could have easily gotten in to Snape's class.

And I had yet to see him study or check out any of the reference material from the library on Runes... Remus had sent his own notes and texts but surely Harry would need supplementary material.

What if it was all a cover... what did he actually do in the room all day long? That room was unique... it could give him anything he wanted... that was worrying. With the way Harry was acting... could he really be trusted alone like that. What if he tried something foolish? He could even be trying to follow in his fathers footsteps... learning to become an Animagus. It was one thing to do it with others, where you had support and help... but to do it alone... Harry could potentially kill himself in the process. There were reasons why the procedure and process were strictly regulated.

I stared at Ginny with pride.

"Ginny, that's brilliant. See I never noticed those things... Harry needs us to keep him on the right path. He doesn't know what he want's. He needs us to show him." I praised.

Ginny blushed but I could tell some of that confidence had returned.

"But what good does that do us now... Harry won't even speak to me." Ginny said in worry.

"Well we can't give up on him... We'll just have to be there for him. Agreed?" I asked as I stood up with my hand extended to the girl.

Ginny looked up at my hand and me and a new fire rekindled within her... there was hope in her eyes...

Reaching forward, Ginny grasped my hand tightly, and I pulled her up without letting go.

"Agreed." The girl said resolutely. A mischievous smile upon her face.

"After all, he's only a boy... he doesn't know what he needs." She announced sympathetically.

I laughed and hugged the girl closer to me.

"Very true..." I agreed.

In hindsight... I would one day wish I had stopped to really listen to the girl... So many problems could have been avoided if only I had.

... ..

December 25 1996 – 8:00 am

Beep Beep Beep ...

My eyes open and I let the blurry world focus once more. For a moment I'm in that dreary peaceful state between sleep and consciousness. That state of ignorant bliss where nothing matters and everything is all right.

Then who you are and what you have done becomes revealed and the illusion is shattered once again.

I curl up in the blankets, not feeling particularly festive as I stare at the snowy window; the white glare of the fluff irritating my eyes.

I suppose I might as well get up... it's not like there's much else to do.

...After a few moments I slide myself into an upright position and lean against my wall.

My bedroom feels so foreign these days... spending 9 months out of the year in a room halfway across the country having suitably distanced me from my own bedroom. It has barely changed since I was that 11 year old girl leaving for the train September 1st.

It was that same obnoxious sky blue with my stuffed animals hanging from the walls and shelves. I had an unfortunate habit of tearing my

stuffed animals, and instead of having them fixed I would grab a thumb tack and nail my plush friends to the wall in some strange display of pride at my creative display.

I don't know why I ever thought that idea brilliant...

Rolling off my bed, I felt my feet hit the soft carpeting. That was nice at least. No cold stone.

Relishing the soft sensations under my toes, I stood up and made my way over to the hanging mirror. My hair was as ghastly as ever. I had a crease across my cheek from the pillow, and I felt I looked a tad frumpy.

With that morning routine over, I grabbed a brush and started to tame my hair as I wandered out of my bedroom and toward the bathroom.

My eye's wandering over the festive trim. Mum had clearly gone overboard again like every year. The house was like an add for the seasonal section at the superstore a few blocks away.

Tinsel and holly hung everywhere... from the numerous pictures of the family to the painting of a lake by a tree and cliff that my dad had picked up from a garage sale from who knows where.

Walking into the bathroom, I went through the rest of my routine walking out with at least a more presentable mop of hair and fresh breath.

It may not have been noticeable... but I wasn't exactly very happy.

Why you might ask. Two words... Harry Potter.

...Three if you wanted to get technical and include his middle name; an additional four if you included his moniker from the wizarding world.

Things had not gone as planned; not at all. As I wandered the hallway to the stairs I contemplated the last few weeks.

Our last spat had truly been our last. I had gambled and lost more than I had dreamed possible.

I had called his bluff, I had challenged him and told him to give in and tell me everything or I would walk. I had not thought the action through; I had not anticipated that he would choose the later.

He had done all the walking and I was left alone; so very alone.

Ron had not abandoned me, but he did not sympathize with my plight either. He blamed me for the new status quo... and I couldn't really disagree with him.

At first I had been indignant, not willing to accept that I had done anything wrong... but once reality set in... it was obvious. It didn't hurt that Ron spelled it out for me on more than one occasion when I had denied my part in the situation aloud as well... well not physically at least.

It was humbling in a way... and amazingly painful to realize that I had been the reason why I had lost one of my oldest and bestest of friends.

I wondered how things would go now... would we just ignore each other? Would I just be any other student to him, a meaningless peer in his peripheral vision as he went throughout the rest of his Hogwarts education?

Would I even see him again after Hogwarts? I could not imagine a life after Hogwarts without him.

The thing with losing him so thoroughly; it had forced me to really confront my feelings for him.

It was irrational, and I couldn't really see a future 'together' but he was still there. I knew whatever life intended for me... I needed him. More than a friend should have needed a friend. The troubling thing was... as I really did some soul searching I realized my attitude... my behaviour had been leaching the happiness out of my life for quite some time.

I had always assumed it was the fact that I was just that much more mature... but in fact, I was truly that much less...

I had been too busy making sure everyone knew I was the respectable intelligent Hermione Granger, that I had started to push people away. It was a wonder I had any friends as it were. I had never noticed because Ron and Harry had been there to be my buffer from the reality that was my life.

My peers had reached that age where houses and rivalries started to mean less and less. Former enemies soon became peers. Strangers became friends, and friends became more.

I had been stuck as a child pretending to be a grownup so long, I had fooled myself into thinking I had succeeded.

As I said... it was very humbling.

"Hermione... Merry Christmas Dear!" My mother cried in joy as she tackled me from behind as I reached the bottom stair and turned towards the kitchen.

I barely managed to stay standing from the force.

My mother was like a big kid during the holidays... this time of year rejuvenating her like no other.

My first instinct was to huff at my mothers childish behaviour. But I stopped. I had just thought of her as 'Mother'...

That felt wrong... that felt like something the other Hermione would have said... the one who had been causing me so much trouble... When had I stopped call her mum?

So instead of following my ingrained tendencies, I grasped at my mum's hand as she wrapped them around my torso.

Letting my hand rest against her's, the feel of her wedding ring on her hand and the soft skin I had remembered from years gone by; from

when I was sick and bed time stories... I couldn't help but grasp at the hand just a little tighter.

"Merry Christmas Mum" I said back gently while giving her hand a firm squeeze.

My ingrained tendencies fought such a sentimental act.

When had it become so uncomfortable for me to be this tender with family? Was I really this foreign from the world around me? What kind of person have I truly become?

My mother... my mum, squeezed my hand back and let go, putting her hands on my shoulder and spinning me about so I could come face to face with her, I saw a puzzled but happy smile.

She stared at me for a moment; her natural instinct telling her something was different.

"Is everything okay dear... you seem off?" She asked curiously.

I smiled a small smile.

"I'm fine mum... just been doing some thinking... you know me..." I said in self deprecating laughter.

My mum gave me an amused smile... "That I do dear. Rest that brain of yours today... it's Christmas." She instructed warmly while giving my forehead a kiss. She had to stretch to reach as I was a little taller than her, my mother being a small woman, but I happily leaned forward to close the distance.

"Your father's in the living room; be a dear and help me bring breakfast over." She instructed.

I remember... it was our own little tradition. Christmas breakfast in front of the warm fire and tree. All the temptation at seeing presents not a foot away, but having to get through the meal first.

Finally convincing mum and dad to let me open one... halfway through my pancakes... It was the only time of year we ever had syrup in the house... pancakes lathered in syrup.

I relished the sweet taste.

When was the last time I had pancakes... not for years... the house elves never served it for breakfast.

Previous Christmas's I had always had something going on... searching for information on philosophers stones... a vacation in the alps, Grimmauld place and consoling friends from attacks.

I decided I truly needed this, just as much as I needed to change... I had to re-attain some of the things I had lost... like family.

Walking into the living room, I spotted my father, he was seated in his lazy boy, a plush brown leather thing that he had snuck back from work one day, claiming that he never had time to sit in it at the office.

He had his reading glasses on as he looked over some papers.

"Put those down..." My mum scolded gently. Immediately my father... No my dad; flinched, startled at the intrusion. I had forgotten how jittery he could be, always losing himself in whatever he was doing. I couldn't help but smile at the reminder of things I had lost to my earlier memories.

"Honey... What have you got there...?" He asked innocently.

"What have I told you...? Leave your work at work." My mum scolded fondly while she pulled the documents out of the man's hand.

"Yes dear..." He said contritely.

"That's more like it." My mum said fondly while giving him a kiss and beckoning him towards the Coffee table where we had set up the plates.

“Hermione... Merry Christmas sweetie.” My dad said once he stood up. Reaching out he pulled me into a warm hug and then he held me at arm’s length so he could take a long look at me.

“Getting lovelier each year... I remember when you used to get me to do your hair in pigtails... Interested?” He asked teasingly.

I blushed at the reminder. “Dad...” I asked in a pleading laugh.

“Alright, alright...” he acquiesced releasing me from his grip but leading me to my seat at the head of the coffee table as we all took our seats.

I couldn’t help but enjoy the meal and the nostalgia it provided. How much of my youth had I wasted away trying to be an adult too soon?

It had finally reached that time. My stack of three pancakes sat half eaten and my warm milk was a third finished.

As expected, my parent’s had finally acquiesced and brought forth the presents.

Handing me the first present... I unwrapped the festive Father Christmas wrapping to reveal...

“Is this...?” I asked not daring to believe it.

“I believe professor McGonagall called it an Apparition tutor pass.” My mum said off the top of her head.

I looked over the gold embossed card with my name on it.

“But how... I’m not allowed to learn until 7th year.” I asked not believing I had been given such a gift.

“Apparently, because of your performance over the years and a recommendation from Professor McGonagale you have been deemed responsible enough to be granted an early license. Some one will visit you in January to start teaching you how to apperate.” My dad said with a smile.

“Admittedly, it’s a little bit of a selfish gift, once you learn, we expect you to visit every now and then during the year. Every few months is really too long to go without seeing you dear.” My dad explained.

I could feel my eyes become teary. I had felt so rejected over the past few weeks, being cut off from my friends, and realizing I had a hand in my sudden lack of companionship... the lack of being wanted.

To hear about the effort my parents went through to give me such a gift, if only to see me a few day’s more out of the year... I truly needed this gift. More than they would ever realize.

Leaping forward I wrapped my arms around my dad’s neck in a tight hug.

I didn’t let go for a few moments; relishing the fact that I had someone who wanted me.

I let go and gave my mum the same hug... thanking them profusely.

The card laying forgotten with the wrapping.

Finally I had let go, much happier than I had been in a long time. My happiness seemed to be infectious as my parents smiled in a way I had not seen for years.

Quickly presents started to be exchanged, a magical camera I had bought for them was received gratefully; I was glad I had not stuck with my usual sugarless candies.

I had gotten 20 pounds in a card from my aunt Rose in Moscow, and a gift card promising some boxing day shopping with my mom. My dad begging off the mad hassle that was shopping on that day.

Finally I had one last gift left, a small rectangular box in silver wrapping.

Tearing the wrapping off, I gasped at the book before me.

It was the special edition Hogwarts: A history

They only printed a hundred copies every 50 or so years. It was a valuable collector's edition. It held the most up-to-date events. There had even been rumours that the now revealed Chamber of Secrets' history had been included. Making this book all the more special.

"Thank you... How did you know?" I asked.

"I'd gladly take credit, but it's not from us..." My mum told me.

"It's not?" I asked in confusion.

"Sorry dear. It was delivered by a beautiful snow white owl just before we went to pick you up." She answered. Missing the significance of the avian.

I stared in surprise at my mother and then at the book... 'Harry...?'

He had gotten me the gift... did that mean there was still hope?

I clung to the book tighter... To me, it meant there was still hope. The old Hermione couldn't stay, I knew that now... but would Harry accept the Hermione I was going to strive to become... could I really have it all?

I wordlessly clung to the book letting its weight sooth me as I helped clear away the wrapping and dishes.

"Now?" My father begged.

"Oh fine..." My mother teased.

My dad smiled jubilantly and gave my mum a kiss as he raced back to the living room.

"...men" my mother said fondly as she watched the man race back to turn on the T.V.

Television was a no no during such events... only family. That was the Granger way.

It had not been a few moments's before I could hear the click of the television as it turned on and my dad channel surfing to the nearest news station.

My mother shared an amused smile with me... one which I returned.

"So dear, tell me about your school, How has...." My mother never got to finish her sentence before I could hear my father calling out.

"Hermione...! Emily!" The man called frantically.

Puzzled the two women dropped what they were doing and headed towards the living room once more. My mother grabbing a dish towel to dry off her hands as she had just begun to do the dishes.

"Dan... what's wrong...?" She asked as she entered ahead of me through the swinging door, and then turned to face the television.

Following my mum into the living room I was privileged to see both my parents shocked faces as they stared at the television. The dish towel lay forgotten on the floor.

"What's wrong?" I asked I was becoming alarmed.

My mum turned to look at me while my dad continued to stare gob smacked at the TV.

"Is that your friend dear?" She asked while pointing at the TV.

Confused, I walked forward and turned to look at the television.

The book in my hand slipped out of my grip as I watched the still frame image of One Harry James Potter, Boy-Who-Lived, in the top corner of the TV.

"For those of you just tuning in... A startling event took place yesterday evening. Something that has rocked our perceptions of

what is real and what isn't to the very core." The man on the television added dramatically.

"With the release of confidential files and sudden declassification of the subset of the population termed the 7800, our world has had to adjust dramatically to such an influx of information. From Hate groups to cults... we've thought we've seen it all." The man summarised.

Looking intently into the camera, the man continued. "Apparently not."

Suddenly the screen flickered and the television started to play what appeared to be a home video of a little boy who was throwing snow at a child opposite him.

The news Anchors voice resounded over top the footage.

"Be warned, what you are about to see is considered violent and shocking. Viewers discretion is advised."

A streaming marquee started to roll along the bottom running along side the BBC logo while introducing text like the names of the church and victims.

The footage continued to play, until suddenly, the bright light and sound of a large explosion could be seen from the distance followed by a giant plume of fire and debris rising above the roofline.

Suddenly the video footage changed to show from a different angle. A man's camera tilted away from the explosion and he inadvertently captured footage of a sudden influx of men in black robes and white masks appearing from no where and diving out of alley's and street corners. They were yelling things at the church goers while pointing sticks at the crowd. One of the men in black robes could be seen leading a stout man in a dark coat at wand point from the direction of a snow plow. The man's was clutching at his side but struggling in the man's grasp.

Suddenly the scene shifted again to another camera... The man holding it was shoved by a death eater and he had to drop the camera...

The video showed the fall before it finally came to a stop as it landed at a slight angle recording another angle of the action.

The group of Death eaters were starting to herd the children away from the parents. A select few weren't going to have that, and proceeded to attack the Death eaters.

One fairly tall man landed a successful punch knocking a death eater back.

The man who was being dragged toward the group took the opportunity to fight back as well. Head butting the man holding him before walking forward with his fist raised toward the closest Death eater.

That was as far as either got before the rest of the cloaked wizards opened fire.

Streaks of green were all that were seen before both men fell to the floor lifeless. A Woman screamed and tried to run to her fallen husband, but was quickly felled by another burst of green.

There were screams and cries of terror from the crowd as the men and women in front of them seemingly killed their fellow church members.

Suddenly the image shifted again... a camera that had fallen closer to the children had a good view of the church. The church itself could be clearly seen smouldering as smoke was leaking from the building.

Suddenly the doors opened with a bang and another death eater ran out of the church flames licking at his feet.

Flames exploded outward, hinting at the inferno inside.

The man in death eater Garb smouldered as he literally let steam off his body as he took in deep breaths.

Suddenly a giant blue iridescent ball shot out of the flames being followed by a white streak before the entrance way to the building collapsed in on itself cutting off all exits and entrances.

The death eater shot a yellow spell at the ball but it simply rolled off it before shattering on impact with a light pole with a gong like noise.

Out of the ball a man in priest robes collapsed in the snow. Not 5 feet away from the camera.

Another scene shift, this time showing the action from above.

A man was nervously filming the scene below while his wife was calling the police. The camera vibrated in his touch; as he tried to hide himself from sight while still filming.

The camera clearly showed the death eaters swarming the man at wand point and pulling him away towards the parents.

They tossed him aside and started to conference with the death eater who had escaped the church. The parents themselves swarmed the priest asking him for questions and pointing emphatically at the children.

Suddenly the scene shifted once more.

The scene shifted again back to the camera by the children, as it filmed the church.

This is where I gasped in shock as I watched the next set of scenes. My mind never being able to fully comprehend what I was seeing.

I watched as suddenly the glowing rose glass window of the Mother Mary and her infant son suddenly dimmed before a large projectile like object shot forth out of it.

Suddenly the dark black thing unfurled itself and I finally got my first glimpses of Harry.

The giant beautiful wings whipped outwards with a snap, immediately catching a draft with fire erupting out behind him making him glow just a little as it licked at his body.

The boy... nay young man on screen, slowed his approach in a ... symbolic stunning fall landing on his knee and fist in the middle of the street.

The Ground around him vibrated and the snow below billowed away from him in a misty wave. The camera itself, 6 or 7 feet away vibrated upon his impact with the street.

The black haired, ebony winged man lay on the ground. Steam trailing his body.

Behind him, the church seemed to let out screams of pain as it caught fire.

Suddenly the he looked up and for a brief moment green eyes and a lighting scar were visible before the winged man rolled away from a streak of light that impacted the ground a foot away from where he had been.

The scene shifted again... with Harry's voice calling to the death eaters... telling them to let the people go.

His shirt in shreds, soot and ash caked on his right shoulders, his chest partially visible. The hem of his pants was in tatters from the fire and battle inside. Holding two wands within his hands, he let an aura of power radiate off himself.

The scene shifted again, showing the lead death eater stepping forward and order the man he referred to as Potter to give up instead, lest he kill the hostages.

The scene shifted again back to the camera near the children. Harry turned his head to track the man's wand that could be clearly seen pointed in the camera's direction.

Moments passed before suddenly the death eater fired for what appeared to be no apparent reason and Harry sprung into action.

A child flew to him as he moved with impossible speed towards her.

An ice sheet below seemed to tear away from below his very feet and absorb the green jet of death.

More than a couple Avadas were sent at the children, and if they had hit them, they would surely die.

The camera clearly saw Harry point with his left hand at the children before the very snow that was falling seemed to come alive and swirl together into fist sized crystal clear balls impacting each green blast in the nick of time.

Harry sprung into action and with the child still sitting on his right forearm, took out a death eater with a back hand that left the man's head at an odd angle as he landed on the snow below. The scene shifted to show from above where the man was recording again.

I could clearly see a man aim his wand at Harry, and shoot a spear like blast at Harry.

Thankfully Harry seemed to sense it somehow and barely rolled out of the way. I watched as the spell impaled another death eater, blood flew from his back from the exit wound that was created.

Harry rolled into a group of death eaters just as the Death eater who had been hit by the unfriendly fire, crumpled to the ground.

A bright blue shimmer appeared. I watched as Harry created a shield around himself and then let it expand with explosive force knocking death eaters back away from him.

Taking the time to spin around, Harry raised his left arm high while clutching the child close to him.

His voice could clearly be heard hollering out. "Evertamens!"

At the exact moment, a shimmering could be seen forming around the death eaters... stopping short of the parents. At the centre stood Harry with the child in a clear bubble.

The shimmering formed into a blob like iridescent donut of energy, before vaporizing the death eaters into black powder.

It was like watching a man destroy himself from the epicentre of a nuclear bomb... crumbling away from the sheer energy released.

The particles paused around Harry, floating hauntingly around him.

The camera was having a hard time focusing, fading in and out to static but it remained centered on the events below.

Harry beat his wings, and the dust scattered in the wind.

Harry could be seen wobbling on the spot for a moment before he stilled himself and took in his surroundings.

Suddenly the scene shifted again back to the cameras below.

Harry could be seen making eye contact with a pair of people and jumping the doughnut crater over to them. They ran forward and reached out for the child on his arm.

A very Harry Potter smile appeared on his face as he looked at the child.

“You can open your eyes now...”

“Where did the bad men go...”

“Away....”

The parents stared at Harry almost in worship. Most of the other parents were also staring, try to take in that they and the children would live. Harry appeared to fidget under their stares before nodding at the two parents and walking away.

His wings suddenly vanished in a black misty like ether as he approached an object that I recognized as a death eater mask. He destroyed it... almost immediately more wizards arrived.

The parents screamed in terror but Harry could be seen walking in between the two with his hand out warning the parents that they were friendly.

He never saw Remus streak forward and tackle him with Mrs. Weasley in hot pursuit.

A tall aged man could be seen directing orders to the multiple wizards to flank different positions; before heading over to Harry himself.

Mrs. Weasley screamed in fright pointing out a large something that could be seen protruding from Harry's arm. After a few moments. Harry's eyes wandered and fell upon the camera. For that moment Harry's surprised fright could be seen. The scene quickly shifted to each camera as Harry spotted them. Even the one in the apartment window.

A police car could be seen pulling up, and Harry could be seen being jabbed with something by the tall older wizard before vanishing.

More police cars pulled up and officers stormed out with weapons raised. An armoured car arriving with what looked like S.W.A.T. teams forming a guard.

There was a stand off, before a short black man in a black suit walked away from the armed guards with his arm raised; indicating he wanted them to wait.

Dumbledore himself copied the man, indicating his own troops who had pointed their wands at the muggles upon sight, to be at ease.

They met half way before the screen flickered and the news reporter could be seen once more.

"The rest of the footage has been confiscated and is unavailable for distribution." The man explained.

“Speculation that an internal civil war may be arising due to the attack has spread widely but, a spokesman for the parliament has claimed that the 7800 are not to be treated as terrorists, citing the boy identified as Harry Potter; who is still missing, as proof of the well intentioned members of the group.”

I could only stare at the screen in shock, I found myself thinking to myself moments before I fell over onto the floor in a faint, ‘I had finally found out Harry’s secret...’

Now why wasn’t I happier about that.

AN: Sorry for the long wait, my fault entirely, big weekend and all, couldn’t devote as much time to writing as I wanted to... but here it is anyway.

Oh and thank you all for the many reviews, I really appreciate the feedback.

I admit, reviews make me happy.

Aealket has agreed to beta/edit for me so thank him for making this chapter easier to read.

I had lots to explain as I was writing but I can’t think of anything to say.

It may seem out of character for Hermione to suddenly realize the error of her way’s so suddenly after building the chapter up around her the way I had, especially considering how I had written the story to begin with... if any of you disagree, I’d be happy to explain my reasoning in my reply.

Oh quick thing:

I was informed that the scene with Cho was iffy and to consider revising. I am going to leave it but explain what I was thinking. Personally I’m a big Cho fan. She’s one of those tragic characters that I really feel for. Cedric, if there was ever such a thing, would have been her soul mate. With him gone, Cho will lead the rest of her life

seeking love and someone to fill that void within her. That's not to say she needs a man to complete her, but you can all get what I'm talking about. Harry is the next best thing... being the only one in my mind capable of helping Cho on any level because of who he is and what he's been through, especially with him being there with Cedric in the end.

Why am I telling you all this... That entire scene was supposed to be about Hermione staking her claim in Harry for various reasons. For this chapter though I was trying to give Cho an excuse for being so wary of Hermione in her and Harry's final fight. It may come across as Cho is being manipulative and conniving. But I wanted to make it clear that what you read was all through Hermione's perspective... that was how she perceived it. It was also to show how paranoid Hermione was getting. How mentally, the way she was perceiving and reacting to things was unhealthy. That was supposed to tie in at the end with her epiphany of her behaviour. You can all take what you will from that section what you will. Whether you like Cho or not, it's up to you, it won't affect the story very much if you decide to interpret it a different way, but I just wanted to make it clear how I had intended it

Anyway, till next time.

Quazi

Chapter 25 – Good cop, Bad cop

“ ... ”

Harry's eyes continued to stray about the room haphazardly. The two Order Guards by the door stood stonily. They kept their silence like Bob once had.

Harry was currently seated in the Citadel's boardroom. The windows had been covered by curtains.

The only light was unnatural; coming from fixtures scattered around the room.

Harry doubted they worked on electricity... though the light was as steady and unchanging as any bulb.

That bothered him. It added to the silence. Personally, he would have preferred the lit flame of wall sconces or something, anything, to add character to the bland room.

He needed the distraction.

His left hand drummed an unfocused tune on the table top. His other pinned to his side in a magical sling.

Apparently the piece of wood that had pierced it had nicked a nerve cluster. Harry felt he was lucky... a difference of even a fraction of an inch and he might have lost any possible chance at retaining control of the hand. He could have even lost his entire arm.

As it was, the healers felt he would be back to one hundred percent after the multiple potions that permeated the bandage did their work. Magic was a wonderful thing... Now if only that luck would hold.

Remus had protested on Harry's behalf, citing his injuries and the fact that today was Christmas of all days, but really there was no putting it off. Harry had been a central figure in a major event.

Harry had used magic in front of Muggles, and he had used magic to kill...

He was not worried about being punished; well not much. Even though his actions were much more severe than using a Patronus had been the year before... He had the assurance that the people in charge nowadays would see reason.

The Order was going to handle the situation... so he hoped that he wouldn't be put through the standard circus of the wizarding legal.

But that did not mean that there weren't procedures and other formalities that had to be followed. Harry had learned during his recovery yesterday that the Order reported directly to the international confederation; and as much clout as Dumbledore had, in the end he would have to submit to their will.

That meant that Harry was to be interrogated. His every action was to be exposed and picked apart. Every word from a "but" to an "if" would be scrutinized. He had to be careful with what he said.

Harry wasn't even sure how he was to explain his wings... Dumbledore had only a brief moment to explain to him what would happen while the healers were swarming over him.

Then he had been shunted aside as the men and women doused him with potions and spells. A stunner being one such spell; something for which he was grateful. Thinking of the healers working on his ribs while he was awake.... It was not a pleasant thought.

He had been secluded from everyone save Remus. Had he been an adult; Harry wondered if even Remus would have been excluded.

Boring as it was Harry was a little relieved at the seclusion. He was dreading the reactions of his friends and family. How does one go about explaining... that?

Somewhere in his mind, a small voice constantly whispered a reminder of how freakish he truly was. No other voices objected and he was left to the whispers of his own self doubts.

Suddenly there was a creaking and Harry turned to watch as the doors slowly opened.

In walked two men. One very prime and proper man wore dark robes, was clean shaven and unfamiliar. The other man was someone Harry knew; he had a very familiar long beard and half moon glasses, Albus Dumbledore.

Harry was relieved... he had hoped that Dumbledore would participate in the interrogation, if only because he trusted the man more than some impartial third party.

The order Guards stepped aside to let the men enter. Dumbledore waved his hand in dismissal and after a brief stiffening, and an almost unnoticeable bow, they walked outside while closing the door; presumably to guard the entrance to the room.

Harry pulled away from the table and stood, more out of needing something to do than anything.

"Sir..." Harry said in greeting.

"Mr. Potter, how are your injuries fairing..." Dumbledore asked in an odd tone of voice.

It was strained in a way that was unnoticeable to most people who did not interact with the man as much as Harry had.

"Better sir..." Harry was a bit put off with the man's uncharacteristic behavior. For one thing he had called him "Mr. Potter". Harry had gotten used to being referred to by his first name. The sudden shift into propriety reminded him uncomfortably of the year before, when the headmaster would refuse to look him in the eye. Harry didn't think Dumbledore was angry with him... or disappointed, if anything Harry felt the man was more upset with what he was being forced to do.

"I am pleased to hear that... Let me introduce you to, Director Roderick, he will be our witness on behalf of the ICW." Dumbledore stated in greeting.

“Mr. Potter...” The Director Roderick said by way of greeting; a small nod of acknowledgement, and then... Harry might as well have been a gnat; So far beneath his the director that he was more of a nuisance to be dealt with than anything else. Harry was a tad more wary of the bland man.

“Director Roderick...” Harry nodded back to the man.

“Director Roderick. Might I have a word with Mr. Potter...?”

The man turned to stare at Dumbledore... seemingly waiting for an explanation for his request.

“Remus Lupin, Mr. Potter’s Guardian has appointed me as Mr. Potter’s council, through these matters and I must first explain to him his rights. I would appreciate a private moment.” Dumbledore explained... his polite words; a mask concealing his command.

The man stared at Dumbledore, an almost suspicious tone to his eyes.

“Is there a risk of a conflict of interests...?” The man asked more in warning than anything.

“I should hope not... but if you would director Roderick.” Dumbledore answered in a tone that did not hide his command.

“As you wish Warlock Dumbledore.” The man nodded... taking a swift and precise turn, he exited the room to wait outside.

Dumbledore seemed to sag a little in relief before focusing his attention on Harry.

Leaning forward with his fingers clamped together Dumbledore stared at Harry earnestly.

“I must first impress upon you Harry. That you are not in trouble and no matter what is said by either I or Director Roderick, there will be no punishment to be dolled out.”

Harry had not known how much he needed to hear that until the words had left the man's mouth.

"I am sorry to put you through this Harry but we do not have much time... I do need to explain some things to you." The man apologized while walking forward and taking a seat directly adjacent to Harry.

"I am afraid though... That I, as a 'warlock', can not offer you any advice during the questioning, lest I be ruled an inappropriate questioner and replaced with another. I will ask that you be very wary of what you say, In no way does Director Roderick have any command or control over you, and as such, you are free to refuse any 'requests' the man makes." Dumbledore said significantly.

Harry stared at the man in slight confusion. He was trying to tell him something... but he wasn't telling him directly. Suddenly a wave of information splashed across his mind.

'Your secrets are your own... no one else's; we are being watched even now... your secrets are your own... no one else's; we are being watched even now...' A grandfatherly voice echoed in Harry's mind over and over.

Harry's eyes widened a fraction of an inch, and Dumbledore smiled in relief at the received message.

Deciding to try and help the man in helping himself, Harry asked a question; to Dumbledore's great relief.

"What can you do for me during the meeting sir, as my council...?" Harry asked.

A wide smile spread across the man's face as he stared at Harry.

"An excellent question; should you ever be concerned... turn to me, and ask me directly these exact words. 'I request my council's advice'."

“By international law, I am granted permission to then pause the questioning, to give you further options. At all other times... I am obligated to remain an ‘impartial’ questioner.” The man explained.

‘There was a law to cover this type of situation?’ Harry wondered in confusion.

“How are you my council...?” Harry asked. The situation was completely bizarre to him.

“It is a tad complex; there are certain loopholes in the law that have been left by other parties for various purposes... I simply decided to...” Dumbledore started.

There was a sudden knock at the door and without invitation the Director entered again.

Harry was a little off balance... he had hoped to ask more questions but apparently his time was up.

Dumbledore stood from his seat and nodded at the man once more...

“Shall we begin Warlock Dumbledore?” The man questioned.

“We shall.”

Director Roderick immediately stepped forward and pulled out a manila folder and placed it in front of Harry.

“Please sign the forms where indicated, Mr. Potter.”

Almost at once, the space directly in front of him on the table recessed and a quill and ink set were provided to him.

Harry cautiously opened the folder and saw the small scripted text and notations. At the very bottom of the very wordy document was a blinking signature line, indicating where he should sign.

Harry started to read the document... but had not reached the second sentence when he could hear the slight thumping of a pair of shoes as the director impatiently waited for Harry to read the document.

Harry blushed a little at the man's impatience... feeling stupid for taking so long. He idly thought about just skimming the document but knew that he had to know what he was signing... the piece of paper could be much more than what it seemed. Hermione's own little contract for the D.A. came to mind as proof of that.

Feeling foolish for even doing this so early Harry turned directly to face Dumbledore and asked. "I request my council's advice."

Harry got a sense of relief from Dumbledore and knew he had been right to ask as the man immediately said. "I would advice against signing the document Mr. Potter, you are in no way required to sign any documents or contracts until you have reached your majority."

Almost immediately Director Roderick objected.

"Mr. Potter was granted his wand rights during the month of June. Such an act indicates he is to be considered an adult in the eyes of the law." The man stated.

"Are you addressing me as council to Mr. Potter, or as the warlock to the British Order.?" Dumbledore asked.

"Both..." The man said bluntly.

"As Mr. Potter's council I am obliged to point out that Mr. Potter did not sign any documents accepting the waiver and was offered the privilege granted. As such he is not to be considered obligated to waive his rights as an underage wizard. And I am not allowed to comment further as a warlock until Mr. Potter dismisses me as his council for this part of the questioning..." Dumbledore stated professionally.

"He has used his wand during the summer holidays without repercussion... that indicates his acceptance."

“We could argue the matter but as Mr. Potter’s council, I am advising him not to sign the magical contract as an unnecessary waiver of his 7th and 12th rights under the wizard’s charter. If you wish to argue the matter of semantics, then I can arrange for a tribunal to book a court date after reviewing the information.” Dumbledore offered.

The stoic man offered Dumbledore a frosty stare before replying in the negative and pulling the manila folder away from Harry.

“Mr. Potter, Do you require your council further or could you please dismiss him so we may continue with our meeting.”

Instead of answering the man immediately, Harry turned to stare at Dumbledore...

Dumbledore nodded his head in confirmation. “I believe you may dismiss me for now; until you require my services again.” The man stated.

“Um... alright... I dismiss my council until I require him again...” Harry paraphrased Dumbledore.

Apparently his words were very important here... he was going to have to be doubly careful.

Dumbledore nodded and Director Roderick indicated a seat directly opposite Harry for Dumbledore to seat himself in.

Harry was almost disappointed that Dumbledore didn’t conjure up his own chintz chair like he had so many times before.

When the director sat himself down, he put the stone pensieve on the table and slid it over to Harry.

“Mr. Potter, Please provide a pensieve memory of the events of December 24 1996.” Director Roderick ordered.

“Um... I don’t know how sir...” Harry said. He had seen Dumbledore do it often enough but he had never taken a memory from his own head before.

“Simply touch your wand to your head, while concentrating on the memory, and then when you have selected the memory, pull it out with your wand.” The man instructed.

Harry was about to proceed, when he looked over at Dumbledore... he was staring at Harry carefully.

Remembering the mental warning Harry had derived out of the man the earlier before... Harry decided to ask.

“Am I required to provide a pensieve memory by law...?” His wand inches from his temple.

Director Roderick seemed to stare at Harry agitatedly, splitting his stare between Harry and Dumbledore before haltingly answering.

“No... but it will be noted by the International Confederation that you were unwilling to provide proof of your own recollection of events.” The man stated in warning.

“Am I being charged with something...?” Harry asked. Remembering Dumbledore’s assurance of no punishment.

“No...” the man said unwillingly.

“Then I respectfully refuse to provide a memory... sir.” Harry said in his most confident tones... needless to say he was no where near as confident on the inside.

“Very Well Mr. Potter; dually noted.” Dumbledore said in acceptance while pulling the pensieve away.

“Then shall we begin with the questioning.” Roderick stated in a much less pleasant tone than before.

“Did you Mr. Potter willingly use magic in front of muggles?” The man asked.

“I had no choice, Death Eaters were attacking.”

"A simple yes will suffice." The man stated while making a note on a piece of paper.

"Were you aware that the muggle's present, were recording the event?" Dumbledore asked next.

"No..." Harry asked, thankful that Dumbledore would ask that question. Roderick didn't seem like he wanted to hear Harry's side of the tale... only confirmation on his own theories.

"Were you not aware of the presence of such recording equipment earlier in the day?" Roderick asked.

"I saw them earlier but I was not aware that they would still be recording...." Harry defended.

"Again Mr. Potter, I would ask that you limit yourself to a yes or no answer unless directed otherwise." Roderick stated briskly, while jotting down what Harry thought was a simple yes on his piece of paper. Thankfully, Harry could see Dumbledore's own notes writing the conversation word for word.

"Are you aware of the secrecy act... and how it would apply to muggles?" Dumbledore asked.

"I haven't read the act, but I do know muggles in general are not supposed to know about magic." Harry said haltingly. Harry had hoped that Dumbledore would continue to give questions to balance out Roderick's more biased ones, but he supposed that Dumbledore had to at least make an attempt at an interrogation.

"Very well..." Dumbledore stated, thankfully not reprimanding Harry for his wordy answer.

"Did you instigate the attack upon the Death eaters?" Roderick asked.

"They were holding a man at knife point and had been able to perform magic... I acted in defense ..." Harry justified.

“That is not what I asked Mr. Potter, Were you the one to first attack the Death eaters....” Roderick asked while looking at Harry carefully.

“Yes...” Harry stated reluctantly; feeling like he had already condemned himself.

Looking over at Dumbledore he noted the blank stare... Harry mentally reminded himself that he should have asked Dumbledore for advice for that question.

Hindsight was 20:20 after all.

“What spell did you perform...?” Dumbledore asked.

“I levitated objects at them.”

“How did you perform a levitation charm while the muggles were still suppressing magic?” Roderick asked.

Harry paused... he had used his wandless skills for this instance.... But the death eaters had performed a levitation charm... deciding, Harry told a half truth.

“I watched Bellatrix Lestrange levitate an object moments before... I don’t know how she did it but she did.” Harry stated after a moment.

Roderick stared at Harry suspiciously.

“You realize Mr. Potter that we will check Bellatrix Lestrange's wand for evidence of this...” The man said in warning, detecting Harry’s deception.

“I do now...” Harry stated a little belligerently. He didn’t like this man.

“Do you wish to change your statement...?” The man asked.

“No”

“Very well...Mr. Potter, what happened next?” Dumbledore asked, breaking the silent feud between the two.

"I heard an explosion and I could feel the suppression go down..." Harry stated, skipping past a few moments conveniently.

"How were you aware that it was the muggle suppression? No witch or wizard has ever reported being able to perceive the suppression field." Roderick asked immediately.

Harry stared at the man in confused horror. Had he already said too much...?

"I was only aware of it when it went down... I was never aware of it before." Harry said in truth.

Roderick made a lengthy note on his papers before looking up again.

"Were you responsible for setting the building on fire...?" The man asked.

"Not directly..."

"But you were responsible..." The man asked for confirmation.

"I set fire to a death eater who then set fire to the church."

"So you admit to arson...?" the man asked.

"I do not." Harry said in outrage.

"Did you not just admit to initiating the fire spell that set fire to the building?"

Instead of answering Harry decided to be direct with the man. "Under no circumstances do I admit to arson... that is final." Harry said in anger. The man was looking for a crime... suddenly the interview felt much more dangerous than it had before.

The man grimaced, apparently Harry had somehow averted that trap with his statement... he wasn't entirely sure how but the man moved on from the fire questions.

A few minutes passed as Harry explained his perspective as best as he could. Roderick was frequently trying to confuse him by twisting his words about, to accuse Harry of something anything. Dumbledore throwing him less irritating questions, but still, there were one or two damning questions that Harry had no choice but to answer with a 'yes' or 'no'.

"Did you or did you not physically assault an order member?"

Dumbledore too turned a surprised eye at the man. Apparently they weren't working from the same scripts.

"What... no I never." Harry defended.

"Did you not, pierce the shoulder of your bodyguard with a shard of wood?" The man asked.

"I banished the portkey at him to save his life... A beam was about to fall and would have killed him." Surely Bob did not think otherwise?

"The force with which the portkey was shot could be considered lethal..."

"I was more concerned with getting the portkey to him as fast as possible otherwise he would have died."

"So you admit to reckless endangerment of a trained officer..." the man stated.

"Does he plan to press charges....?" Harry asked a little worried; more at what Bob thought of him than anything else.

Roderick paused. "Not that I am aware..." he admitted.

Harry paused himself. "Then why are you asking me that...?" Harry asked back a bit angrily. The man was playing on his own guilt complex, that did not make Harry a happy wizard; not a happy wizard at all.

"I will be the one to ask the questions here Mr. Potter." The man stated stiffly.

Harry noted that he did not ask about Bob again as well.

"What happened next Mr. Potter?" Dumbledore asked.

"I banished the priest outside..."

Harry could see Director Roderick's mouth opening, but cut him off while he continued to answer.

"I shielded him and banished him outside just before the balcony above collapsed sealing the exit. Unfortunately Bellatrix had thrown her mask out as well, which I would later discover had been a booster to keep any wizards from entering the area." Harry stated while staring at Roderick daring him to find something to fault with his statement.

He did..." How did you manage two spells at once?"

Harry slapped himself mentally for forgetting that tid bit. Bellatrix had even tried to figure that out during their fight.

Telling another white lie... "There were a few death eaters who had died within the building... there were plenty of wands around for me to cast two spells at once. "

Harry was glad for the fire, having probably turned the wands to ashes soon after.

"And then..." Dumbledore asked.

"I dueled Bellatrix for a few minutes...."

"Are you asking us to believe that you had managed to out duel Bellatrix Lestrange, at your age... Mr. Potter" The man asked derisively.

Harry stared at him angrily. 'So he was one of them...' the man was a denouncer. He sought to reveal the truth behind famous individuals... bringing them down a peg, for some kind of ego boost. Harry had read enough hate mail from last year to recognize the type.

They were the ones who liked to make sure he knew that they were not swayed by his celebrity. They wanted him to realize that they were waiting to pounce at any and all of his mistakes, condemning him for the fraud they thought him to be. Harry had no love for these vultures... they were a despicable breed.

"I never said I 'out dueled' anyone Director Roderick. On the contrary, I was extremely lucky to stay alive....Bellatrix had managed to steal my wand later on and tried to kill me with it herself. I only survived by rolling out of the way in time." Harry stated mockingly at the man... wanting to make sure he knew how little respect he had for him.

The man frowned agitatedly at Harry but did not comment.

Harry was about to continue his story when he realized this was the point where he had killed Bellatrix with a his wandless magic... How was he supposed to keep this a secret?

Keeping his silence... Harry waited for the next question which unfortunately turned out to be "And then..."

"I... managed to get my wand back and escaped the building..." Harry stated; a remarkable job at understatement if he thought so.

"You escaped the building..." Roderick stated unbelieving that Harry had the gall to even call what he did that.

"Yes..."

"We have eye witness accounts that say you had wings attached to your back as you flew out of the building."

The only comment Harry could make to that was....

"I did not fly out... I believe I fell." Harry only remembered flying inside the building... he clearly remembered trying to slow his fall the rest of the time he was airborne.

"How did you attain your wings?"

Deciding now was a good time as any..."I request my council's advice..."

Roderick agitatedly grunted at the request.

Dumbledore already knowing what Harry needed did not fail to ask.

"Mr. Potter is your condition known by others within the order. You are not required to state names." The man asked pointedly.

"Yes..." Harry stated.

"Were there security precautions taken...."

"Yes..." Harry stated again, trying to see where this was going.

"Did those precautions entail secrecy...?" Dumbledore asked.

"Yes..."

"Are these precautions still in effect?" The man asked.

Harry paused. He wasn't sure... was he supposed to say yes or no.

"I don't know?" Harry stated cautiously.

Dumbledore smiled and Harry felt like he had just dodged a bullet.

"Then as your council, I would advise against commenting on certain aspects lest you reveal too much."

"Now really, I am a representative of the ICW. I demand full disclosure." Director Roderick argued in agitation."

"If you had sufficient clearance you would have already been briefed on Mr. Potter's Wings, like you had been about his training." Dumbledore stated with a twinkle in his eye.

"Then give me clearance Dumbledore..." The man demanded.

"I never said that I had clearance either..." Dumbledore stated calmly.

Harry stifled the urge to laugh at the situation. Director Roderick fumed in his seat at being toyed with by Dumbledore.

"Then how are we to interrogate Mr. Potter, as much of what happens next is documented with him and his wings or performing unusual abilities." Director Roderick asked angrily.

"We will just have to ask our questions, and should Mr. Potter be able to answer, he will, otherwise he will have to decline for fear of revealing classified information." Dumbledore stated pleasantly.

"That is unacceptable... this is an interrogation, Mr. Potter must answer the questions asked, he can not simply pick and choose.

"That is unfortunate, but surely you would not suggest that classified information that might be dangerous, be spread. Causing Mr. Potter to face possible legal repercussion as severe as treason...." Dumbledore stated solemnly.

"I..." Roderick's mouth opened and closed but he could not find the words to suitably express his speechlessness.

The man suddenly snarled and raged. "Warlock Dumbledore, I am formally requesting you leave as you are hindering this investigation." The man ordered.

Dumbledore turned steely eyes toward the man.

"I am still representing Mr. Potter as his legal council, as appointed by his guardian so I am not capable of addressing your accusation as a warlock... but I warn you Director Roderick, I have not only been recording Mr. Potter's answers but also your interrogation style. I will

contest your allegation and be warned, I will have more than enough evidence to prove a few allegation of my own." Dumbledore stated with an unfamiliar distaste in his words.

"Is that a threat...?"

"No it is a warning... As such you will have to provide suitable evidence before you may dismiss this nations Warlock from an interrogation, and I assure you I have been acting within legal parameters for both the ICW, and the Order of the Phoenix." Dumbledore warned.

Harry stared between the two in slight incredulousness. All this was happening because of him. It was like watching a badly scripted legal battle.

Harry would have to give it to Director Roderick... the man had nerves if he could stare down Professor Dumbledore the way he was.

"Mr. Potter, Please dismiss me..." Dumbledore instructed as he continued to stare down the man in front of him.

"I... dismiss you..." Harry stated unsurely.

"Director Roderick... as a member of the ICW, I am halting this investigation and I am calling for an impartial investigation into your conduct through out these proceedings. You have displayed unprofessional behavior and inappropriate bating of an under age witness... You are suspended from your duties for the remainder of your time in Britain." Dumbledore stated. "I will conclude the investigation without you."

Director Roderick himself said nothing... seeming to have been expecting this turn of events.

That did not however, stop the man from staring hatefully at Dumbledore and then at Harry; clear warning laced within his frigid stare. Harry preferred the unreadable mask with which he had started. The man collected his papers and in a dignified manner exited the boardroom.

Harry stayed silent as he tracked the man's progress.

'Ass...' Dumbledore's voice stated resentfully.

Harry's head whipped about to stare at the man, unsure whether Dumbledore had thought that, or said it aloud... or whether he had imagined it himself. He was leaning toward the latter

Dumbledore himself stared at the door a moment longer before turning back to Harry and visibly let himself relax once more.

"On behalf of the ICW. I formally apologize for Director Roderick's behavior." Dumbledore stated.

"Um, no problem sir..." Harry was still a bit unsure about what was going on here.... Everything seemed so unreal. Just yesterday he had battled death eaters and exposed magic to the entire world... today he was dealing with what appeared to be pureblood politics on an international scale. What would happen tomorrow?

Dumbledore stared around the room for a moment before standing up and pulling a sock from his pocket.

He tapped it, causing it to flash a bright blue before he offered it to Harry.

Not questioning the behavior, Harry took a hold of the sock and found himself being whisked away to Dumbledore's office at Hogwarts.

Dumbledore waved his wand about the room once, creating that shimmer effect to indicate the room was secure before he smiled more freely.

Plopping down in his chair, he slid a bowl across the table....
"Vegemite toffees...?"

Harry looked at the black cube like candies and concluded that he would rather not taste the rather sinister looking sweets.

“No thank you sir...” Harry stated as he took a seat in his usual chair opposite the man.

Dumbledore seemed to pout a little. Harry noted that he didn’t take one either.

“Well Mr. Potter, I must congratulate you. You handled yourself splendidly.” Dumbledore praised.

“I did?” Harry asked slightly incredulous.

“You did, those questions were meant to provoke a reaction out of you as you might surmise. I fear Director Roderick reports to a sect of the ICW, which is more traditional in its approach to wizard/muggle relations.” Dumbledore stated.

Harry thought that that was a euphemism for pureblood bigots but didn’t want to ask for confirmation.

“They are very unhappy with current affairs and you have not been a favorite topic amongst them...” Dumbledore added in slight praise... as if that was to be congratulated.

“What will happen now...?” Harry asked after taking a moment to ponder the man’s words.

“Much Actually... But I’m afraid I must first see to my ICW responsibilities... Harry, this is not a command but may I see your memories of the event. You may also choose to verbally confer what happened...” Dumbledore asked.

Harry had no objections to that and had already put his wand to his head and started to recall the events of the day before. Starting with the Cab ride from the store and ending with the portkey.

Harry felt a snap within his mind... as if a rubber band had been flicked in his brain. Suddenly the memories of the event seemed to appear in duplicate, seeing that as a good sign, Harry pulled his wand away from his head and felt the oddest sensation.

It was as if his head was being drained of liquid. He could feel the memories pour out of him.

Harry watched as the strand of memories hung fragily from his own wand tip. Harry could still remember the event... although it was slightly blurry to him now. Faces were a tad more indistinct, and words were a bit more jumbled, but it was all there. Harry couldn't understand why, but warning flags rose at that. As if his mind was trying to tell him something...

"Excellent Harry, I had expected you to take a few more tries before you managed." Dumbledore praised, quite pleased.

He had already gone to his cupboard and brought back his pensive. Once the pensive was in front of Harry, he automatically dipped the tail of the memory into the bowl, he gave his wand a little flick and watched as the memory separated and dropped into the bowl only to merge and expand. Small scenes of snowfall, and children singing were visible.

"If you would accompany me..." Dumbledore asked. He and Harry both leaned their heads into the large bowl, and Harry could feel the falling sensation as he tumbled through his memories.

Although this was different than his previous trips down pensive lane...

...He felt, connected here? He wasn't afraid of his landing, as if he was in a dream and knew that he could make himself land on his feet if he wanted to... which he did.

Landing, Harry looked around the scene. He was watching himself walking toward the cabby.

Dumbledore was standing to his right, smiling benignly.

"I suggest we follow..." Dumbledore stated.

"Um how... the cabs cab's not that big?" Harry asked

Dumbledore smiled..." In a pensive the owner of the memory can control the environment, simply will for us to be able to do something and it is possible."

Seeing where this was going and knowing the truth of Dumbledore's statement, Harry simply willed Dumbledore and himself into the cab. Somehow despite the physics saying contrary, they both sat comfortably beside the memories.

Harry and Dumbledore listened in on the conversation the two had. Dumbledore smiled in amusement when Harry warned the man about jewelry.

They were approaching the church when suddenly the snow plow drove by. Dumbledore immediately asked. "Harry please stop the scene."

Startled at the sudden command, Harry immediately complied on instinct and watched as the world around them paused.

Dumbledore got up and slid through the walls of the cab toward the snow plow driver. Unsurely, Harry walked behind the man.

It was hard to see as it was snowing so heavily, the particles stopped mid fall in this eerie silence.

"I see..." Dumbledore stated in comprehension.

Dumbledore turned around and faced Harry. With his right hand he raised it and pointed it at the snow plow driver.

The man was staring at the cab leeringly.

Was Dumbledore confirming the cabbies proclamation... was the man just a git, who wanted to spread misery on Christmas

"The man's name is Isaiah Morison... he is part of the French Morison's, his father was suspected of being a death eater for quite some time but died in a fire a few years back." Dumbledore explained.

Harry stared at the man in comprehension...

"It was a set up... they trapped us here?" Harry asked.

"It would appear so... I suspect you had been spotted and the death eaters had planned for you to become trapped in the street." Dumbledore said absently as he turned around on the spot seemingly searching for something.

"Ah ha..." He said victoriously.

He waved Harry to follow and proceeded to walk toward a familiar alley.

Hanging from the fire escape, was a death eater who was climbing down to the ground. Under his robes he wore what appeared to be acid washed jeans and trainers...

There were three other death eaters above. They were coming out of an apartment. Willing himself to be able to see it. Dumbledore and Harry found themselves being pulled upwards to the window height.

Out of an electric fireplace there was a jet of green flame and a man's upper torso captured mid floor travel. There was an elderly Indian man on the floor... he was dead.

"And now we know how they have been moving about." Dumbledore stated solemnly as he observed the scene.

"I suspect there may be a death eater or sympathizer working in floor control, I shall have to have their logs confiscated..." he stated absentmindedly.

Harry continued to stare at the elderly man... he had no idea who the man was... he apparently lived alone... the Television was on and a TV tray lay forgotten on the coffee table.

It felt wrong to just watch him... strangers seeing the man in his own home, just intruding to see how the man's evening had been interrupted by a visit with death.

Snapping out of his morbid conundrums, Harry decided to voice a question.

“How are we seeing this? I never even set foot in the alley, how can we see this in my memory.” Harry stated, unnerved that he had the memories of a dead man in his own head that he had never seen before. He probably had the moments of his death as well if he rewound time.

“The mind is an amazing tool Harry...” Dumbledore stated while he clinically observed the fireplace and the death eaters. “You are more aware of the environment around you than you perceive... Muggles as well, locked within each moment we perceive is a multitude of information and events we are never consciously aware of... intuition, gut feelings... these are all ways that our brains try and tell us something significant is happening. Consciously we can not accept the information we can not see or hear.... But our brains can.” Dumbledore explained. Taking one last look at a death eater and noting their wands... Dumbledore waved a contemplative Harry out to join his memory self.

Allowing the memory to proceed they watched as Bob and Harry went into the church... and the cabby went off to meet with the death eater.

As soon as the giant doors to the church shut... the world around them shifted and they were thrown into the building.

“Then again... there are limits to the mind as well... you can not perceive everything all the time...” Dumbledore added as he took in the scene of the church.

He smiled at the sight of the children and parents, and stood beside Harry as he listened to the music.

For a moment... Harry felt silly for appreciating this moment. Dumbledore was as much a friend to Harry as Voldemort was a nuisance. Dumbledore was like an unspoken grandfather... always there, willing to dole out advice in a heart beat. The man's

appearance didn't hurt matters either. While his memory self contemplated family and the holidays... his true self relaxed at the companionship as they watched a children's choir on Christmas day.

Scolding himself for getting caught up in the moment, Harry refocused on the scene around him. The choir had just finished and the father was shoing everyone home.

Harry watched as everyone left and the father led Harry up to the room to take in the scene below.

"I see the death eaters there...." Harry stated, moments before his other self pointed them out.

Dumbledore nodded and watched critically each action. Harry could see his face pause for a moment as Bob spoke for the first time before snapping out of it and starting to argue with the man.

"Needless to say, I am not supportive of you arguing to fight death eaters Harry..." Dumbledore lightly chastised as the memory Harry showed Bob his wandless skills and stormed off.

Harry reddened a little knowing it was reckless but seeing as Dumbledore didn't seem all that upset by it, he didn't think the man was angry with him.

Willing the two down below, Dumbledore came face to face with Bellatrix Lestrage...

"I start to get flashes of Bobs and Bellatrix's thoughts about now... Bob is planning on dieing for me and Bellatrix knows she will be able to perform magic soon...." Harry commented absently as his eyes locked on the soon to be dead women.

He still had her wand on him... he expected someone to take it away, but he had found it side by side his regular wand when he had woken up this morning.

Dumbledore watched as Harry sprung into action and praised Harry for using his wand as a distraction for his wandless skills. Commending that kind of deception as a wise move on his part.

The battle continued and Dumbledore visibly winced as the shard of wood pierced Harry's arm. Harry had not realized he had screamed in pain when the wood had entered and exited his flesh... it all being a blur during the explosion.

Dumbledore watched as the priest attacked and Harry retrieved his wand... he congratulated Harry on saving the man's life with the shield... though when the moment Harry had comprehended Bob was missing... things started to turn weird.

Suddenly the world slowed down and the world around them turned less blue, the colors becoming more like that of how it truly happened.

Harry yelped in pain as his hand burned from the flame as it licked at his fingers in slow motion.

That was not normal...

Dumbledore took all this in with a surprised eye; motioning for Harry to come close, he erected a shield around them.

"We shall have to investigate this issue further..." Dumbledore stated in confusion as he took in the scene.

"Are you consciously doing this Harry, or is this part of the memory?" Dumbledore asked.

Harry took a moment and thought of making the memory less intense... but nothing happened. He could pause and rewind and move them about but he couldn't make it all go back the way it was before.

"No..."

"Then I suspect this has to do more with your perception of events...be wary of spell fire" Dumbledore said.

Looking where they were... Harry pulled Dumbledore back, remembering that this was an area that had a multitude of spells firing between everyone.

Harry watched his memory self take in all the factors and then banishing the portkey back at Bob. Suddenly the world returned to normal blue... and time sped back up again.

The beam collapsed where Bob had been and Dumbledore cautiously released the shield.

The room was back to normal temperature so that was a good sign.

They went back to watching the scene unfold... to the priests escape to Bellatrix's messy end...

Then the world changed again. The memory seemed to fade in and out of existence as memory Harry transformed.... It started to lose cohesion before everything returned with a snap, as if nothing had ever happened before.

Dumbledore gave Harry a strange look before turning to watch the scene again. Harry had his own theories.... Maybe his transformation had caused this... but he remembered something like this happening before... when he had unwittingly destroyed Dumbledore's office just a few months ago... he hadn't transformed then?

Harry automatically willed them up to memory Harry's level and watched as Harry crashed through the window.

The rest was fairly standard, though Harry had to admit... he thought he looked much more intimidating than he truly felt at the time... every now and then Harry would spot a camera and cringe as it captured his fight.

In the end a pensive Dumbledore instructed Harry to pull them out of the memory and watched Harry as he returned to the office.

"It seems, like always, I have more questions to investigate...." Dumbledore stated in amusement. Harry smiled a half smile... letting the events of what happened seep in again.

Re-watching the scene, everything had been so surreal... he had caused all that.... It was too much to comprehend.

"What now sir..." Harry asked, his secret was out... how were they to damage control that.

"What would you like to happen...?" Dumbledore asked.

"Sir?"

"This is your secret to tell Harry, I'm afraid it would be pointless now to hide the fact that you have become slightly different. As we speak the video has circulated around the world through the muggle news, and I believe just as quickly through the wizarding. I believe they have taken to photographing the muggle's televisions as they displayed scenes from your fight.

At this Dumbledore reached across his desk and passed Harry a rolled up Daily Prophet.

Curiously Harry unrolled the paper and stared slightly incredulous at the full page moving picture of a muggle television replaying Harry's fight sequence. He was tumbling out of the church and landing on the ground with his wings clearly visible...

The words "Exposed" branded above the article.

Harry didn't even bother to read it... turning to Dumbledore he asked... "How bad?"

"Actually not as bad as the wizarding paper would have you believe..."

"Its not?"

“No, now had this happened last year, I believe that would have been a different matter all together, but with the Muggles recent exposure of our kind, you can be considered a member of the ‘7800’ thus not exposing magic.” Dumbledore stated benignly.

“The 7800 don’t have wings sir....”

“True... but that is the most rational explanation any one that does not know magic will be able to come to. At the moment, the wizarding world is still reeling from the incident and I fear, panicking; as I’m sure you can understand... but I’ve released an official letter that is to be circulated within tomorrow’s paper denouncing some of the hysteria.” Dumbledore stated.

Harry felt a little relief at that. It appeared as though Dumbledore was on top of things. He was glad...

“But this brings us to an important question... how do you want to handle this.” Dumbledore asked.

“I still don’t understand sir... how am I supposed to handle this...?” Harry asked.

“Well, we have been quite secretive as of late... with the proverbial cat out of the bag, are we to take a different route or will we continue as we are? What I’m asking is, do you still want to keep such things a secret or not.” Dumbledore asked.

“I don’t know sir... What would you suggest?” Harry asked.

“I, Mr. Potter....” Dumbledore stopped to consider his response.

“Normally I am an advocate of the truth. The saying is quite accurate, it does set you free. I believe you have already experienced your share of personal issues related to the secrecy we have been keeping.” Dumbledore stated sympathetically.

Harry kept silent, trying to avoid thinking of the incident in question

"In this case, I would advise some disclosure. We do not tell specifics like how you received the skills but you do not have to deny you have them. Although I would advise that you continue to keep your wandless abilities to yourself as much as possible. It is still possible to make the general public believe that you can only perform that feat while transformed." Dumbledore suggested.

"What about Voldemort..."

"I had not believed this secret would have been secret till you faced him. I had anticipated that you might have had to reveal your powers for this type of scenario...."

At Harry's incredulous look, Dumbledore corrected himself.

"Not this exact scenario... and certainly not to the scale to which you have been exposed of course; but I did believe that you would be forced to reveal your wings at some point." Dumbledore stated.

Harry let the man's words wash over him.

On one hand, it was a relief... he had hated keeping all the secrets like that, but on the other... he was terrified. He would have to deal with his friends now... what was he to say. What about Luna, they had kissed, it had meant quite a bit to him, but now in light of recent developments... would she see it the same way? Would she be repulsed that she had been that intimate with Harry, Was he a person even... or was he a thing? Something that was unclassifiable.

Taking a deep breath, Harry tried to calm himself.

"Can I go home sir?" Harry asked. He was tired; he just wanted to go and enjoy as much solitude as he could, at home with the only other person he was sure would accept him.

"Of course Harry." Dumbledore said sympathetically. Standing up, he reached out and directed Harry toward the fireplace and floo pot.

Harry was about to reach in for the powder when he felt Dumbledore's hand on his shoulder.

Looking up into his eyes Harry came face to face with his half smile.

“Everything will be alright Harry... you are a remarkable young man, and you surround yourself with other remarkable individuals. They are more accepting than you may think.” Dumbledore stated consolingly, seemingly reading Harry’s mind.

Harry gave a non committal nod, as he let the man’s words wash over him. He was feeling too numb to feel grateful for his consoling.

Reaching into the pot Harry seized a good handful of the powder and spent the next few moments twirling toward his home. All he wanted to do now was crawl into his bed and hope it was all a bad dream.

... ..

Harry spent the remainder of his holidays locked indoors.

Remus had seemingly understood Harry's need for seclusion, or at least most of it... He fussed over Harry’s wounds but otherwise pretended the incident had not taken place at all; trying to inject holiday cheer directly into Harry’s veins, trying to make up for all the madness.

Harry had tried to accommodate the man, but he wasn’t exactly in the festive mood anymore. He felt sorry for ruining the man’s holiday, but he felt that Remus, at least understood He did not push Harry into socializing or such... though he seemed to want Harry to make an effort, if only because the grownup in him told him it was the right thing to do....

Harry had often heard the floo activate and heard Remus turning away various Weasley’s who had wanted to check up on Harry.

Harry had even heard the doorbell ring once and spotted his neighbor Laura through his bedroom window. Harry had hoped that he had not ruined Remus's personal life by his exposure. Remus did not mention it, so Harry was unsure.

He had received more letters within the next week and a half than he had received in all his day's since entering the wizarding world.

Much of it had been from the Daily Prophet, requesting interviews, or from various angry wizards and witches condemning him for exposing magic. In the end Remus had to ask Dumbledore to have the mail intercepted as the amount of owl traffic had been abnormal at best.

He still received letters from his friends however...

Harry couldn't work up the courage to really open the letters. He planned to lie and say that he couldn't find their letters in all the hate mail that he had received. This was entirely possible as he had gotten enough to fill two garbage bags. Harry suspected that Remus knew but he never called Harry on it; he would always hand Harry the screened letters and stare at him significantly as he said that his 'friends' had written him.

Harry tried his best not to feel too guilty with his actions...

Harry was to avoid the train this year as Dumbledore did not want to expose him to the parents in such a public location as platform nine and three quarters. At least at Hogwarts, Dumbledore could turn people away.

All this resulted in was a very nervous Harry who sat uncomfortably in his living room while waiting for his escort.

Harry had been able to sleep in; the train should have left the station hours earlier.

Remus was currently running about the place thinking of different things Harry might like to take with him.

It didn't matter so much to Harry as he wanted to travel light this year. He was only taking his clothes school supplies, map invisibility cloak and other necessities.

He was going to leave his gifts behind in his room, not having to fear that when he returned they would be trashed by his intolerant relatives.

He was making an exception for Luna's gift... he had derived quite a bit of comfort from it through out his solitude. When he listened to it, he almost believed everything would be alright in the end after all. Almost... years of experience had taught Harry that life rarely worked out so perfectly; often giving you what you wanted, then snatching it away when you needed it most.

The solitude also served to make Harry slightly cynical; having only his thoughts to keep him company did very little to make him anything else.

Remus, finally after listening to Harry turn down an extra set of mittens from that strange drawer of his for the third time, plopped down on the couch next to the teen.

Turning his head to stare at the young man Remus asked. "Nervous?"

Something about how the man had said it and the ludicrousness of the question could only make Harry snort in laughter.

Remus smiled at the response.

"Thought as much..."

"It's not a big deal I suppose; I mean I've dealt with worse..." Harry said in general, not really focusing on any one aspect of his situation.

Remus stared at Harry for a moment in silence before remarking. "I suppose you have..."

It was almost as if a little piece of Remus died when he said that, Harry sometimes cursed his mental powers.

Some of the insights he received only served to depress him. He wished he could figure out how to control it... if only to be able to block out such streams of insight.

There was a moment of silence as Remus turned away from Harry and stared at a hanging garland above the entry way to the kitchen. They had put off taking down the decorations and Remus would now have to, while Harry was gone.

Harry suspected that had been Remus's plan as the man had been trying to keep Harry from doing too much work around the house, causing Harry to feel slightly lazy as he watched the man do the chores. He didn't want to laze about like Dudley while someone else cleaned after him.

Harry had eventually changed the routine where he would at least do his own laundry and vacuum. Neither had wanted to cook too much so they had ended up ordering in mostly. Something Harry was sworn to never tell Mrs. Weasley.

All in all, not including the 'incident' it had been one of the best holidays Harry had ever had. He was even considering coming back for Easter break, a short holiday that was more useful for catching up on the impending finals... But Harry wouldn't mind coming back if only to spend some time with Remus.

Remus continued to ponder the garland... until he suddenly remarked.

"Laura stopped by earlier...."

Harry stared at the man in surprise, if only because he had not expected the man to talk about it.

"Oh..." Harry said nervously. He wasn't sure what to say to that.

"She saw the news and recognized you immediately..." Remus stated calmly.

Harry was worried. Did she shun Remus because of Harry's abnormality? Was she worried about the killer next door coming after her daughter?

"I had told her that you wanted to be alone for a while... that you wanted some time to yourself after what had happened." Remus explained. "She was quite worried..."

Harry could feel his doubts proclaim victory at that.

"She had seen your wound on your arm and wanted to make sure you were okay..." Remus finished.

Harry stared at Remus in surprise.

"She was worried about me?" Harry asked unbelievably.

Remus turned away from the garland.

"Don't be so shocked Harry... Laura's a good person, and good people tend to be very accepting." The man said with a warm smile.

Harry knew what the man was trying to say, and he appreciated the thought... but he wasn't quite yet ready to put his fears to rest.

Harry heard the fireplace light and turned just in time to spot his escorts arrive through emerald flames.

Harry's eyes squinted as he spotted his bodyguard. The man himself turned and stared at him with a stare as well.

Harry and Remus stood together; one in greeting, the other for a very different purpose.

Bob walked forward and met Harry half way.

Before Tonks or Remus could say anything each had laid into the other.

Bob with a smack on the upside of Harry's head, Harry with a punch to the mans right shoulder.

"Suicidal idiot!" Both cried in sync.

"Me!" they replied in stereo....

"You're the one who..." One said

"Trying to ..." The other said at the same time...

"Stop that!" They both cried at once

Remus and Tonks stared at the two, watching the strange meeting in confused amusement.

Harry and Bob glared at one another for another moment before they heard a muffled cough emanate out of Remus.

Both turned to stare at Remus.

"Is there something you'd like to share...?"

"No." They both stated again. They paused to stare at one another in accusation for continuing the odd chorus.

Tonks snorted, before walking forward and linking an arm around Bob's elbow and ruffling Harry's Hair.

"Wotcher fly boy..." Tonks greeted.

Harry groaned... "You're not going to call me that all year are you...?" Harry asked resigned to knowing that Tonks would probably create more nicknames than any other person he knew.

"Of course not; I would never make fun of such an angel." Tonks said while pinching Harry's cheek mockingly.

"I'll tell everyone your first name..." Harry said while swatting at her hand.

"I'll give you detentions until you graduate!" She warned.

"It'll be worth it." Harry stated while staring at Tonks challengingly.

Tonks stared Harry down for a moment. "This isn't over..."

Harry felt her ominous proclamation seep in... he was sure it wasn't.

Remus chose that time to pop back into the scene, after observing the three from the sidelines.

"Nothing crippling Nympha..." Remus started.

"Watch it Remus..." Tonks warned with a raised finger.

He stared at the girl in amusement, and then motioned the three towards the fireplace.

Bob went in first... It seemed like tight security for a floo jump from Remus's to Hogwarts but Harry guessed there were other reasons for the body guards.

"Take care Harry, and don't forget to write..." Remus said in farewell. Pulling Harry into a hug.

Harry hugged the man back... "You too Remus."

Harry let go and took a pinch of floo powder before activating the floo and sailing through the familiar dizzying whirlwind, only to land in McGonagall's classroom once more.

McGonagall was present at her desk, marking papers like the year before. Bob was over by the fireplace again, his wand touching the mantle with an odd blue discharge emanating from where the two met.

Soon the fire lit once more and Harry could see Tonks stumble out as gracefully as she could.

Tonks had just stood up before the fire lit once more and Harry heard Remus's voice whisper..."Nymphadora" before the fire died out entirely leaving a cursing Tonks behind...

Harry could see that McGonagall was seemingly engrossed in her work but a slight smile played at the corners of her mouth.

Tonks Led Harry out in a surly fashion grumbling to herself in agitation about applying pepper spray to the man's food and other such malevolent ideas.

Bob stayed behind in the office; Harry wasn't sure when he would see the man again.

Harry split from Tonks side unnoticed as she continued her war path.

The train shouldn't arrive for another hour at least so he wouldn't have to deal with more than a few stares.

Harry dragged his trunk towards the Gryffindor Common room.

Reaching the fat lady he was forced to bear witness to the painting's relief that he hadn't died... having misinterpreted the rumors to mean he had died while fighting death eaters.

Getting into the common room Harry was pleased to note that it was bare of any living presence.

Walking up the stairs, Harry opened his door to his room only to meet emptiness as well.

Unpacking his things, Harry started to get nervous. He had not run into anyone yet. Harry wondered if he would turn a corner only to be ambushed by everyone at once. There were always a few individuals that stayed in the castle during the holiday's it wouldn't be long before he was confronted with them as well.

Finishing his unpacking, Harry secured his trunk and peered outside the window.

He could just barely see the path to Hogsmead. On the horizon he could see where the train tracks would round the lake to Hogsmead village.

Deciding to wander away, as just waiting for them would drive him mad... Harry made his way down to the common room and made his way to the great hall.

He might as well get it over with, there were bound to be other students there.

Not being disappointed Harry wandered into the great hall, only to have every pair of eyes, which were about a dozen, swivel on to him.

The dead silence was foreboding before Harry continued his trek forward to the Gryffindor table.

Flitwick and Sprout were at the head table, with Sinestra on the other side.

All around him various students continued to stair, often talking to each other in whispers.

Thankfully, Harry didn't know any of the students personally, so he wasn't as affected by their whispers as he would have been by others.

So far he wasn't receiving any glares so that was a good sign at least.

Harry ignored the whispers and sat at the table.

It wouldn't be long now... maybe within the hour and he would have to face his friends.

Suddenly sitting in the great hall seemed like a bad idea. He had nothing to do but sit and wait for it.

Getting up just as quickly as he had sat, Harry exited the great hall to more whispers at his odd behavior. He was sure the crazy rumors would start again... he couldn't really blame them.

Thinking about some place he could go... Harry came to only one conclusion.

Making his way to the courtyard, Harry, looked about for any wandering eyes, before activating the fountain and following the tunnel to the green house.

Feeling only remotely at ease when the entrance had closed above him, Harry continued his trek in silence. Finally reaching the other fountain, Harry opened it and re-entered the green house.

Harry felt his lungs release a sigh in relief at the complete and utter silence.

The garden wasn't as lively as it had been before. The floor was littered with red and yellow leaves, the roof littered with snow, and the bushes seemed to be devoid of life. It might have looked nice if the snow had been permitted to fall inside. Harry wasn't too bothered by the garden at its worst,

The floor was clear of any feathers, so Harry had assumed that Dumbledore had collected any remaining ones for study.

Walking toward the balcony, Harry cast a warming charm on himself and looked out over the ledge towards Hogwarts. Harry could just make out the line of black carriages being dragged to the castle gates. They were here.

"Amazing how small everything appears from up here..."

Startled Harry turned around only to find Dumbledore, not more than an arms length away.

"Sir... Sorry, I didn't know you were...."

"Nonsense Harry, as I said before, you are welcome to the garden anytime." Dumbledore dismissed Harry's unfinished apologies...

"It's amazing how tiny everything seems from up here... except Hogwarts. It always maintains that grandeur; that larger than life

personality it has... I've often wiled away hours up here." Dumbledore stated fondly.

Harry stared at the man for a moment... was he going to tell him his friends were going to accept him, was he going to tell Harry that hiding himself away was immature?

"The feast will start soon; I suspect you are not planning on attending?" Dumbledore asked.

"I..." Harry started in objection.

Dumbledore gave him an amused look as if tempting him to lie.

Harry sagged in defeat, knowing it was useless to deny it. "I was hoping to avoid it..." He admitted reluctantly.

There was silence as Harry stared out over the balcony, taking one last glance before he was shunted back into the limelight.

"Very well..." Dumbledore stated.

Looking at Dumbledore in confusion, Harry asked "Very well?"

Dumbledore looked at the teen in amusement. "I will allow you to skip the feast this once, but you will have to face them sooner or later. And class starts Monday; even you can't avoid them forever"

Harry stared at the man in surprise... "You're not going to order me to face them... your not going to make me sit in on the feast?" Harry asked in confusion. This wasn't what he expected. He expected that Dumbledore would frown upon Harry's cowardice, citing the responsible thing to face his fears head on...

"I could if you wanted me too, but you are old enough to handle your own social life. As long as it doesn't effect your schooling..." Dumbledore stated.

Not sure what to say, Harry instead fell back on "Thank you sir..."

Dumbledore spared Harry another amused smile.

“Back to sir again I see...” Dumbledore said in amused reassignment before patting Harry on the shoulder and bidding him farewell. Harry watched as the man went around the tree and vanished. The entrance to his office was probably somewhere in that direction.

Harry stared at the spot he had seen the man for a few moments just wondering if he would ever understand him.

... ..

It had been a few hours since Dumbledore had left, and Harry had found himself falling into a daze as he stared at the castle... just noting how grand it was in comparison to all the dots from earlier... he was the same size as anyone of those dots. Yet other dots like him had built the monolith of a structure. It was mind boggling...

Harry had almost managed to forget his worries when he had heard the noise of the fountain filling once more.

Turning around Harry came face to face with the person he was the most anxious about meeting.

“I thought you’d be here...” the blonde said emotionlessly.

“Uh hi...” Harry stated awkwardly.

Luna walked forward and sat beside Harry in his seat as he overlooked the castle.

“You didn’t come back...” Luna stated blandly, as if she was describing the color of an orange.

“Ya, sorry about that...” Harry stated awkwardly. He felt like he had done something wrong, like he should apologize, but he wasn’t entirely what for.

“It’s okay...” Luna said in the same tone.

“Are you mad?” Harry asked after an uncomfortable silence.

Instead of answering, Luna turned and looked at Harry.

Her stare made Harry wonder if he had killed a puppy.

“I’m sorry, I...” Harry noticed that her lips were starting to twitch... Staring at the girl for a moment Harry caught their upward turn and the mischief in her eyes.

“Your teasing me, aren’t you...?” Harry stated flatly.

Luna’s features broke into a smile before she emphatically nodded her head. “Not at all, I’d never...” She said while her head went up and down mockingly.

Harry wanted to pout but he couldn’t help the twitch of his own lips.

“You’re too easy Harry, You were ready to apologize for god knows what...” Luna mocked while leaning over to Harry and nudging him in the ribs.

“Well what was I supposed to think... you gave me the stare?” Harry defended.

Luna smiled while reaching out with her left hand to entwine her fingers with Harry’s right hand.

Harry felt a little relief as the girl willingly made contact. In his mind he had worried the girl would treat him like a diseased rat...

Taking a moment, Luna observed the arm.

“Does it hurt?” She asked cautiously.

“No...” Harry stated quietly. He watched as Luna, ever so gently intertwined her fingers and unbuttoned the cuff of his school shirt.

Harry let her pull the sleeve up to reveal the only proof of the wound; a circular scar the size of a Knut.

Luna paused for a moment before she carefully trailed her finger on the scar.

Harry felt a pleasant shudder at the touch.

Luna paused once more and pulled the arm back and turned it over to see the exit wound.

She stared up at Harry with an unfathomable look upon her face.

“Luna...?” Harry asked. He wished he could see her thoughts this once, just to know what she was thinking.

“It’s nothing...” Luna said dismissively. Instead she let her features change into one of curiosity.

“I saw the paper; the black feathers, they were from your...” She trailed off for a moment unsure what to call them.

“I’ve been calling them wings... They’re a bit of a recent development for me” Harry answered. Knowing what she wanted, but was unwilling to ask for, Harry stood up.

Wandlessly transfiguring the back of his shirt to have a hole in the back... Harry activated his transformation.

His eye’s closed, Harry felt the final sensations of his wings forming before he opened his eyes and stared at the girl.

She stood up with wonder in her eyes. Gently reaching out, she touched the elbow joint, causing them to twitch involuntarily.

“They’re pretty...” She stated in awe.

“They are not pretty...” Harry argued; feeling offended that she had not described them in a more masculine way.

Luna gave him an amused knowing look, before running her hand down the wing length.

Running her hand over a particular spot, Harry suddenly retracted the wing.

“What did I hurt you...?” Luna asked in worry.

“No... it’s just that it tickled is all.” Harry stated. It felt weird to know that he had a ticklish spot on his wings. It somehow took away from their mystique.

“Ticklish?” Luna asked in a deadpan.

Reaching out again, Luna ran her hand down the same spot.

“Quit it...” Harry said when her fingers reached the spot again.

With a mischievous grin, Luna reached out again and grabbed at the end of the wing with one hand while reaching for the spot she had identified.

Harry laughed at the sensation, his wings twitching away from the girl.

Harry twirled out of the girl’s reach.

“If the world could see you now...” Luna said in amusement.

Reigning in his smile... Harry stared at the girl, before taking a step forward and having his wings encircle her. Quickly bringing her close to him, trapped in their feathery confines...

Startled Luna stared into Harry’s amused eyes.

“If they could see me...?” Harry asked while leaning his head in close.

Luna’s own head tilted a little to accommodate.

Harry could feel the girl’s startled excitement radiate off her; her hand gently leaning against Harry’s chest with her other on his waist, giving her just enough room while also bringing her a tad closer. Harry’s wings tightened just a bit at her acceptance.

Not waiting for a response, Harry closed the distance.

Needless to say, he wasn't afraid of not being accepted by Luna any longer. . If anything he wished he had told her sooner.

AN: Ok this Chapter Sucked. People have said it before, but it needs to be said once more. I suck at writing politics.

My explanation... wizarding politics is different than muggle. Seeing as I'm not a politically minded person, I made stuff up based on how I thought a realistic Wizarding UN would run with Canon the way it is.

Hopefully I'll get better at it later on. I really just needed to lay down some hints for later chapters.

Next chapter I promise we will finish the fall out for the wings. I would have continued but this felt like the right place to end the chapter.

Not much to say, comments concerns?

Quazi

Chapter 26 – I'm not an Animagus!

The day before:

A brunette girl sat nervously in a compartment on the train, her right arm leaning against the window sill, her fingers fiddling with her semi tamed hair.

Her left hand was wrapped around her stomach; a black leather bound book sat protectively between her and the world around her.

The teachers and aurors were patrolling the train, adding a level of security the Hogwarts express had never experienced before.

That left the returning prefects with free time during their return trip back to Hogwarts; something that was appreciated by all but one of those select students.

Hermione would have preferred such responsibilities, rather than having to sit and wait alone in the compartment. The eerie silence inside the cosy little room, contrasted greatly with the hustle and bustle of the rest of the train and the platform from which parents were fussing over their children.

The whistle blew and the train started with a lurch forward... Hermione felt suddenly trapped on the train; a veritable prison from which she could not escape.

Why was the girl so anxious and nervous?

As with many things in her life, they stemmed from a single source; a black haired, green eyed boy by the name of Harry Potter.

After her little epiphany over the winter holidays, Hermione had done quite a bit of thinking... something not uncommon to the girl. She wanted to turn over a new leaf, to make amends... to just become a better person in general. To do such a thing though, it was taxing, as the girl in question had to literally rewrite herself.

In a nut shell, Hermione had a long journey ahead of her, and she wanted to first find a way to rekindle her friendships with those she had pushed away.

Namely Harry and Ron.

Ron had not abandoned her, though Hermione got the impression that he was teetering over the edge. He would still talk to her, try to make an effort; Hermione was secretly impressed with the boy's loyalty.

At one point in her life she would have considered him the most immature emotionally stunted example of a Neanderthal, that she had the misfortune of associating with. Now though, she considered him... he was... he was Ron.

A small smile played across her features as she thought of the boy... and then a frown.

Her mind, reminded her of the other boy...

It was like a badly written soap opera, Hermione paused before realizing, that all soap opera's were badly written... and her life practically mirrored the classic cliché plot of any of those so called dramas.

She was the conflicted femme fatal, except with ungodly hair, and the boy's were her love interests. There was Ron, the safe, caring boy next door; goofy and immature, but with a heart of gold. And then there was the obscenely rich bad boy with a heartbreaking past and a sensitive side he liked to hide from the world, the all around hero, Harry Potter.

She could practically hear the sappy piano music playing in the background as she considered her choices. All she needed now was to get amnesia and fall for Draco Malfoy; if only to turn her triangle into a pyramid.

Her cynical thoughts were interrupted by a shuffling noise and the sliding of her compartment door.

She turned and scowled at the person it revealed.

“Happy belated New Year Mudblood.” Draco said with a pleasant smile as he sauntered into the small room like he owned the place.

Hermione’s eye twitched if only because he continued to call her a mudblood. It was easier to ignore it when she had others around her, something about having others taking offence on her behalf, took the sting out of the words.

“Malfoy...” She said with a scowl. Idly she noticed that he wasn’t accompanied per his usual entourage. She felt a little disturbed by that.

“Now you don’t sound too happy, what’s wrong, holiday’s got you down...” Malfoy said with a mock sympathetic frown. He had the gall to drag his luggage into the compartment and plop down across from the girl; like an old friend.

“Your not welcome here, go find your own compartment this one is reserved.” Hermione said in scorn as the boy mocked her not a foot or two away. She cautiously felt the weight of her wand at her side with her right hand... she clung to the book with the other, deriving some comfort in what it represented.

Malfoy tracked her right hand as she reached for her wand... A genuine smile was on his face as he looked at the girl in amusement. Something was very wrong... There was something very off about the boy in front of her...

He had been arrogant before, he had been confident, he had been snide... but he had never been so... assured.

It was as if the boy in front of her was a completely different person. He held himself in a way she had only ever seen his farther manage.

“Oh come now Mudblood...”

“My name is Hermione...” Hermione interrupted in an angry tone

"Yes yes..." he mockingly brushed aside. "... It's just, for a moment there; I thought you didn't want me around." Draco said with wide innocent eyes.

"I'm not in the mood to deal with you Malfoy, just get out..."Hermione scoffed, crossing her arms and legs in a sign of dismissal. In reality, she just wanted to display her wand, and hug her book just a little bit more. Hoping the sender was here this once, to act brash and reckless.

This Malfoy was unsettling. What worried Hermione the most was the way his grey lifeless eyes stared into her soul. Somewhere deep down, she was afraid of him.

"Well, First... Ouch. Your words Hurt..." Malfoy said with a mocking sneer, he raised his hand and grasped at his chest as if he had a heart to break.

"Second... I don't have to go anywhere I don't want to go... Funny thing about public transport... wouldn't you say." Malfoy announced while leaning back in relaxation.

Hermione took a moment to reign in her emotions, feeling her face heating up in agitation. She seriously considering just up and leaving, when the compartment door opened for the second time.

The freckled, red headed visage of Ron Weasley appeared. He noticed Hermione and was about to say something in greeting when suddenly his eyes landed on the boy opposite her.

A deep frown marred his face as he took in the curious haughty stare of the blonde.

"Malfoy..."

"Hello Weasley, I hear your families actually making some money now... Congratulations." Malfoy smirked at the red head.

Ron stared at the boy for a second, his emotions swimming behind his eyes before he stood tall and proud... "Thank you Malfoy, It's nice to have money and a loving family, some people aren't as lucky." Ron stared pityingly at the boy.

Hermione watched in surprise as even though the blonde in front of him hadn't said or reacted physically in any way. A flare of pure unadulterated hate flashed behind the boy's eyes, at the subtle jibe.

Ron, instead of waiting around for the conversation to degenerate any further... turned to face the girl in the compartment.

"I was just looking for you, some of us have got a compartment near by Do you want to join us." Ron asked, clearly expecting the girl to agree... which she did.

"That would be lovely Ron. Good bye Malfoy; it hasn't been pleasant I'm afraid." Ron watched with a small smile as the girl effortlessly pulled her luggage from the compartment and walked out of the room imperiously.

"So long Mudblood." Draco waved cheerily. Ron stiffened and frowned. Hermione could see his fingers squeeze his wand just a tad tighter.

Taking comfort in that reaction, Hermione smiled and put a hand on Ron's shoulder to ease his anger; the insult not meaning as much as it did moments earlier.

They exited the compartment, and walked away; Ron turned back but saw that the compartment door stayed closed with Malfoy inside.

"I thought he was going to follow us or something..." Ron admitted in bewildered relief. He had sensed the offness too.

"Let's just be thankful he hasn't and be done with it." Hermione suggested, feeling much more at ease now that she had a friend with her.

"What was he doing there anyway...?" Ron asked curiously.

“Oh you know Malfoy, just trying to provoke a reaction...” Hermione said absentmindedly. Secretly she was wondering that as well. This had not been like their other encounters...

“Was he asking about Harry then?” Ron asked cautiously, his eyes looking about the train for eaves droppers.

Hermione frowned... “No?”

Ron turned at stared at her.

“No...? He didn’t mention Harry at all; nothing?”

This was odd, considering the events of the Christmas holidays and the general nature of the Slytherin, the fact that no mention of the boy in question was asked... It raised quite a few flags.

Suddenly Hermione stiffened a little as she realized what they were discussing. Ron as well, that sureness he had before turned wary.

“What about you then...?” He asked.

Hermione knew what he was asking. She had been quite cross with him when he refused to play the spying game she had assigned him. He had been just as cross with her. At the time, she had seen it as the only alternative. She thought Harry would thank her in the end since she was looking out for his best interests. Now she realized how ludicrous that thought had been. She secretly marvelled at his forgiveness over how she had ousted his firebolt in third year.

“I...” Hermione started, she blushed a generous amount, earning a raised eye from the boy in front of her. “...don’t plan to ask.” She finished.

Ron starred at the girl in surprise. “You don’t plan to ask...?”

Hermione blushed at his incredulous tones, but confirmed it with a shake of her head.

“You do know what happened over the holiday’s right?” He asked.

Hermione huffed indignantly, smacking him lightly on the shoulder. “Of course I do you prat...” She scolded him, but with out any true heat in her words.

Ron starred at the girl; Hermione fidgeted under his watchful eyes. She imagined he was going to ask why the sudden change, maybe interrogate her on whether she was lying or not.

She was to be surprised though...

Ron beamed at the girl and enveloped her in a Hug.

“Glad to have you back Hermione...” He said quietly.

Hermione was startled for a moment at his touch, before hesitantly returning the hug.

He believed her. He took her word at face value.

She wouldn’t have in his position, he really trusted her and he was willing to forgive so easily. Hermione hugged the boy just a little bit tighter... she had never realized just what kind of man he truly was.

“I never left Ronald...” Hermione said in humour, trying to find meaning for his words.

“I know...” He said with a smile as he leaned back to face the girl.

Something in the way he said it and the smile he was giving her, made the girl blush just a tad. She didn’t entirely understand what he meant by it, as she was trying to be a new person after all... but that affection and deep insight were there. She knew he had just paid her an insightful and touching compliment.

She mentally tallied up another chalk mark for Ron in her mind.

... ..

The rest of the trip went rather well in Hermione's opinion. Ron had led her to a compartment with Ginny, Neville, and Luna.

Luna had looked up quickly, but she seemed disappointed at who had entered the compartment. Still she spared Hermione a smile but then turned back to her silent ponderings as she looked out the window. She was very quiet for the rest of the trip.

Apparently, Harry wasn't on the train, Ron having looked already for the boy before finding Hermione.

They passed the time in a comfortable manner, exchanging stories about their holiday's or other such tid bits.

They arrived in Hogsmead and took a carriage together to the castle. They were of course besieged by whispers and stares from the rest of the student body, Harry's name coming up often and his apparent absence, mentioned just as much.

Arriving in the great hall, Hermione was surprised to note that the boy was no where in sight.

Luna looked and upon seeing no sign of the boy of the hour, frowned, before she turned to stare at the far corner wall, about 15 feet up near where the enchantments for the ceiling began. She stared at the wall as if seeing past it and came to some conclusion before her face clouded over, morphing into the dreamy exterior she had made famous. She nodded to the group and headed over to the Ravenclaw table.

Dumbledore arrived and started and ended the return feast, never once mentioning Harry or the incident over the summer.

Luna seemed to take all this in with little or no effort before she joined everyone and left the great hall.

Hermione lost track of the girl in the crowd but could have sworn she had taken a left when she should have taken a right.

... ..

Ron had frowned at the lack of his best friend's presence through out the day. He bid farewell to Hermione as he went up to his room.

He entered to find Seamus and dean unpacking their things, and Neville watering his cactus thing that had squirted sap at everyone before...

Harry had obviously been here already as his trunk sat where it usually had, under his bed, indicating he had already unpacked.

'Was he avoiding me?' Ron crushed that thought immediately, at least the part where he was avoiding Ron solely. Ron realized the idiot was probably going to try to sneak in sometime later tonight. 'Probably brooding again...'

'Drama Queen...' Ron mentally huffed; then storing that title away, so he could remember to call Harry that when next he saw him. Ron turned to his own bed and started unpacking his mind wandering as he did...

Dean and Seamus were looking between Ron and Neville curiously; more Ron than Neville.

Ron could practically hear the question racing about their heads, but they had enough sense not to actually ask.

Eventually, everyone went to bed, seeing as it was getting late and the students needed to get back into their usual sleeping patterns; even if it was the weekend.

Ron however stayed awake. In his mind, he pictured how the meeting would go.

He would be bathed in darkness, the door would creak open. He would hear the tell tale footsteps of his friend trying to sneak in.

Suddenly the room would illuminate, and there would be Ron, staring at the boy mockingly, for trying to sneak by him.

Frowning, he considered the lighting... He would wake up Dean and Seamus then... Neville would sleep through anything.

Staring up and making sure the rest were sleeping, Ron waved his wand and incanted a silencio around the boys beds, while ever so gently closing their drapes around them to block out the light.

Nodding in confirmation... Ron looked over and suddenly thought it would be better to be sitting on Harry's bed when he revealed himself. To add to the shock value...

Getting up quickly, Ron switched over and sat on the boy's bed.

He frowned though....

"Is his bed softer than mine...?" Ron asked as he gave it an experimental press with his hand.

He would deal with that later; maybe switching mattresses at a later point when Harry wasn't around.

Back to his foolproof plan... He was going to reveal himself and bask in Harry's shocked surprise... then he would call Harry a drama queen for hiding from him and everyone...

Once Harry realized the error of his ways he would lay into the teen with some good natured ribbing.

This was the part he was looking forward to most. He had spent rest of his holidays, when he wasn't worrying about the guy, thinking up ways of teasing him.

He had even researched the name of the Icarus fellow in case he ever was in an opportunity to tell Harry he was trying to hard...

For the Luna scenario's he would call him cupid, or cherubic.... He had never really wondered what their names were. He had always called them fat flying babies in his head...

"Ron, what are you doing on my bed?"

Startled, Ron turned and stared at the sudden appearance of the boy in question. 'When had he come in?'

"I..." Ron said.

Harry frowned and took note that the boy had a glazed happy expression on his face before he had announced his presence.

A disgusted frown made its way on his face, as his mind came up with an idea that disturbed him greatly...

"You didn't... you know... on my bed did you...?" Harry asked in revulsion.

"What, No!" Ron cried in outrage at the insinuation.

"Shush, you'll wake everyone." Harry warned.

"I cast a silencing spell and closed their drapes...." Ron explained absently as he brushed Harry's warning aside. A blush was making its way on his face at Harry's insinuation.

Harry frowned once more at the new information and turned to stare questioningly at his sheets.

"Honestly Ron, I won't be mad, just... you didn't right?" Harry asked as he pointed his illuminated wand at the bed as if searching for signs of... evidence.

Ron turned an even deeper shade of Weasley red. How had his plan gone so completely to seed?

'Stick to the plan...' his mind advised.

"You're a drama Queen!" Ron cried with an accusatory finger pointed at the boy.

Harry stared at Ron in bemusement as he observed the pointing boy who was still seated on his bed.

“What...?”

.....

It was a long and strange conversation that followed. Harry in confusion and Ron in embarrassment... for reasons he hoped would never be discussed ever again.

Harry had claimed to not be tired and told Ron he planned to go to the kitchens.

Really Harry just wanted to ask Dobby to dispose of his mattress and get him a new one. The thought had already been placed and he didn't want to have to sleep on it any further.

It was a shame, as it was a very comfortable bed. Very soft...

Ron had eventually decided to join him, deciding to distance himself from the bed in question as well.

The two made their way down the stairs to the common room. Harry and Ron decided to try out their disillusionment spells this time, and strolled out of the common room in a transparent blur.

As the two indistinct ripples in the air wandered the hallway, Ron finally asked.

“So... wings?”

The other ripple seemed to almost shrug. “Apparently so...”

“So are you an Animagus or something? Did you stop half way through your transformation?” Ron's voice asked as his outline seemed to turn and stare at the other outline questioningly.

“I'm, not an Animagus... wouldn't my arms have turned into wings then?” Harry's voice replied questioningly.

“Oh... I just figured you were like a griffin or a Hippogriff...” Ron stated.

“Aren’t those magical animals, I thought animagi were always muggle animals?”

The indistinct shape that was Ron paused for a second... “Are they?”

“Well name me one Animagus we know who is a magical animal...” Harry challenged.

A sleepy painting mumbled incoherently as the two indistinct shapes moved through the corridor. A suit of armour looked around trying to spot where the voices were coming from, but just couldn’t spot the two. The fact that the armour had no actual eye’s eyes to see with didn’t help.

“Remus...?”

“He’s a werewolf, not an Animagus...”

“Close enough...”

“As close as Dobby is to a Giant...” Harry harrumphed.

“Well either way, who’s to say you can’t become a griffin or a hippogriff. When was the last time you saw Buck Beak do anything ‘magical’” he challenged. Realizing that Harry couldn’t see him make the air quotes around the word magical he lowered his hands, hoping no one was watching him make that blunder.

“Well then why do they teach us about it in Care of Magical Creatures class” Harry challenged back.

“Why do goblins do our banking... apparently they’re all muggles, according to Dumbledore?” Ron pointed back.

“Touché...”

The two walked down the stairs toward the kitchens for a moment in silence...

"What were we talking about...?" Ron asked.

"I have no idea, why were we talking about goblins?"

Ron shrugged not realizing that Harry couldn't see the gesture...

Harry approached the portrait of the bowl of fruit, before looking around and dis-disillusioning himself.

Ron followed suit and tickled the pear gaining them entrance.

"They entered the room to find the house elves just as active as they ever were. Upon spotting the pair, the elves excitedly pulled them inside, and much to Ron's delight started to offer him sweets and other confections.

Harry asked for a cup of coffee, thinking he would need the caffeine to stay awake.

Ron asked for the same as he thanked the elves for the desserts.

"Harry Potter, Mr Wheezy..." Dobby cried in greeting as he bounced forward.

He had a sauce pan on his head. His ears just managing to poke out from under the iron cast ware.

"Hi Dobby. Why do you...?" Harry pointed at his own head trying to indicate at the pot.

"Oh's, Dobby is being on guard duty tonight... Ever since Ms. Luna's victory over the bad candies, we's elves have been vigilant. I is about to go on my patrol soon." Dobby stated proudly as he struck a commanding pose; he held a wooden spoon in his hand like a rifle that he carried over his shoulder.

"Bad candies... you mean Bob?" Harry asked in comprehension.

There was a collective hissing noise as all the elves frowned in anger and distrust at the name.

“Oh’s we be not speaking the name of the lead Candy sir... He is just the Bad one...” Dobby stated significantly.

Ron snorted a little into his cup as he whispered into his coffee just loud enough for Harry to hear... “The you-know-who of the candy world... the gummy that must not be named.”

Harry tried to stifle a laugh at that, though he stopped when he wondered if that would make Dobby his counterpart.

“Would you’s be liking to join me sirs...” Dobby asked hopefully.

Harry was about to turn the elf down when Ron immediately replied.

“We’d be delighted to help...”

Dobby beamed.

Harry leaned close to Ron as he whispered... “We would?”

“Why not... what else we got to do?” Ron whispered back.

Harry frowned and saw Ron’s point. This was probably good for a laugh.

Dobby suddenly appeared in front of the two boys, a pot in each hand.

“When in Rome...” Ron said, putting the coffee cup down and placing the pot over his head.

Harry laughed as he copied his friend.

They each reached out and pulled a kitchen utensil. Harry a spatula... Ron, a ladle.

Dobby beamed happily clapping his hands in glee. The wooden spoon still firmly in his grasp.

“To the Hunt!” The little man cried.

... ..

A few hours later...

Harry stared at the wreckage around them... A suit of armour who was missing its lower half; it was pulling itself along the corridor trying to give chase to the little gummy warriors as they retreated.

Peeves was stuck in a wall screaming bloody murder, and the floor was littered with thousands upon thousands of lemon drops that had been released from the fake wall that had hid them.

A painting of a nun was crying silently while Sir Cadogen tried to console her... reassuring her that they could repaint her home better and grander than before.

The old one had been washed away by water from an overzealous Ron with a watering charm.

Harry heard the mocking ominous laughter of Shirley the Occamy as he slithered away in freedom, promising sweet vengeance on all.

Harry could come to only one conclusion...

GONG

“OW, what the hell” Ron cried as Harry used his bent spatula to hit him on the side of his pot helmet.

“I blame you for this...” Harry elaborated as he crossed his arms amidst the destruction.

Somewhere the lower half of the suit of armour was running around in circles trying to find its upper half.

Ron looked like he wanted to defend himself but then paused and nodded, knowing it truly was his fault.

“Reckon we should run before anyone see’s us?” Ron asked.

Harry nodded, before instructing a dizzy Dobby that they were never here.

“Yes Sir Mr. Wheezy!” Dobby cried back, having been confounded by accident.

He whipped his hand up in a salute but ended up creating another GONG as the wooden spoon in his grasp struck his protective cooking helmet. Causing the helmet to fall all the way down, until his head was completely hidden under the metal.

Harry wasn’t sure how they had gotten into this situation, but all he knew was to never let Ron convince him to go Gummy bear hunting with Dobbyever again. It just wasn’t worth it... He wasn’t sure the castle could take the strain either.

... ..

Harry yawned as he walked to the great hall.

They had escaped back to their common room and to bed. Harry had wandlessly turned his mattress over when Ron wasn’t looking just to be safe.

They tried to stay silent and just go to sleep but they were too wired from their adventure to do anything of the sort.

In the end they had just broken down laughing at their mini adventure... Glad that Ron’s silencio was still holding strong as they stayed up the rest of the night.

Ron had filled him in half way though on the wizarding side of his little muggle incident.

It was pretty much how Dumbledore had described it.

The wizards and witches were panicking. Harry being such a prominent member of society, being exposed doing magic had led the magical world to believe their society was at an end.

Apparently Dumbledore had been doing more work than he had let on and was actively denouncing any hysteria, meeting the press often, making appearances with certain individuals, and in general, actively trying to calm down the public.

It had worked a tad, as now everyone was just angry at Harry. Him being the one to have caused the mess, no one mentioned the death eaters who had started the fight...

There also seemed to be some more pride in the public nowadays. The recent win against the muggle suppression levelling the field; even if the feat was accomplished by death eaters, the average wizard didn't care, as it proved that magic had proved superior once more.

Harry wasn't too sure on how he felt about that, but put it aside for later thought.

As to the anger from the wizarding world, directed at himself...Harry couldn't care less. He had been hated and reviled so much over the years, the public outcry did very little to bring him down. Especially not after watching Ron accidentally stick Peeves into the wall through methods unknown.

Harry had smirked as he passed by the crowd of students who were keenly observing the writhing poltergeists heiny as it protruded from the wall. Luckily peeves had not seen them as they had been disillusioned at the time, which Harry thought might have been a shame as Filch looked like he would rather shake the culprits' hands despite the damage they had caused. He was having quite a time mocking the poltergeist...

Harry turned the final corner and bumped into Luna.... Harry was about to comment on how the tradition continues, when he took in her frowning stare.

“What did you do...?” Luna asked archly.

Knowing she already suspected, he sighed and admitted... “I was hunting the gummy bears with Ron and Dobby.”

She paused before frowning cutely. “Without me?”

“It wasn’t planned...” Harry said consolingly to the upset girl.

“Promise...” She asked, after a moment.

“I promise...” Harry said with a smile. Tentatively reaching out he pulled her into a hug.

She hugged him back before leaning away and staring at him sternly.

“Next time, if you find yourself fighting Bob... you come get me.” She scolded in warning.

“Of course...” Harry said with a smile. “Am I forgiven?” he asked.

“I’m still upset you didn’t come get me...” She said sulkily as he led her into the great hall.

“What do I have to do to make it up to you...?” Harry asked charmingly.

“Take me on a hunt tonight?” She asked winningly.

Harry paused, remembering the havoc of the night before....

“How long until you forgive me if I don’t....” He asked, trying to weigh his options.

“A long time...” she warned cheerfully as she took a sip from her orange juice.

Harry was about to try and explain how truly strange the night had been when they were interrupted by Susan’s voice ...

“Um... Harry?”

Looking over to his left he was surprised to see the girl in question sitting beside him.

“Hi Susan, morning to you.” He replied cheerfully

“Hello Susan...” Luna chirped in a friendly manner on Harry’s other side.

“Morning Luna... I was just wondering, not that you’re not welcome....” Susan said trying to formulate her question.

“Yes...?”

“Well, again your welcome here anytime, just, why are you sitting at the Hufflepuff table?” She asked curiously...

Looking in surprise, Harry turned and looked at where he was... sure enough he was seated with the Hufflepuffs, the Gryffindor table directly behind them.

“I have no idea...” Harry answered back belatedly.

“You’re rubbing off on me you know...” Harry warned, as he blamed Luna for his zoning out.

“It’s a good thing, you’ll see.” Luna replied back cheerfully as she reached out for a blueberry muffin.

... ..

Hermione watched the pair as they sat themselves at the Hufflepuff table. Susan seemed to strike up a pleasant conversation with Harry and Luna as they ate breakfast.

Hermione had at first been a little annoyed that they hadn’t come to the Gryffindor table, and Harry had ignored her completely. But she was also secretly relieved...

She had no idea how she was going to go about apologizing to Harry, especially with so many people around. She would approach him at a later time... she could think about her approach more till then.

That also let her process the other strange thoughts about the boy... like how he had become an Animagus...?

... ..

Harry huffed in agitation.

Almost everyone who had come up to him had asked him, like Ron, if he was an Animagus, and if so what kind of bird....?

It was getting very annoying having to tell them over and over again that he wasn't, and then having to be asked the question how he had gotten his wings otherwise.

In the end he just said yes... he was and walked away.

The rest of the weekend he had spent getting accosted with that question and getting back into the swing of things.

The student body in general weren't showing the same anger the rest of the wizarding world displayed, which was refreshing to Harry. They too had gotten used to the flip flopping nature of Harry's fame, and while certain people liked him more or less, they only really whispered about him behind his back.

If anything they were more curious... apparently, the student body in general thought that becoming an Animagus was cool and rebellious... Which everyone thought Harry was unfortunately.

McGonagall, was soon besieged by dozens of students wishing to learn more about the transformation. About which she was both pleased and wary about.

All this resulted in was a lecture the first day of class, where McGonagall had reiterated that anyone who attempted to perform the

Animagus rites, would be putting themselves in danger and risking a year in Azkaban for illegally attempting the transformation, should they be successful.

That had started a few more rumours itself, about whether Harry was going to go to jail or not.

By Tuesday, Harry wound up thumping his head on the table in agitation from the sheer lunacy of it all. The fact that Luna and Ron, the only ones truly in the know of it all considered it funny, only added to Harry's exasperation.

... ..

It was Wednesday, Harry's final class had let out and he was looking forward to a nice hot meal and general avoidance of everyone. He had just entered his dorms to put his books away, when he noticed an owl pecking on his window.

Opening the glass paneling, Harry watched as the irritated owl flew over to his bed, deposited a package and flew off with an angry hoot.

Apparently it had been waiting for quite a while.

Going over to the bed, he looked at the package that was addressed to him in a familiar scribble.

Pulling the card out, He flipped it open to confirm the sender.

Hello Harry,

How are things fairing so far? I've been collecting a few articles over the past few days and thought you might want to be kept apprised of some of the muggle news...

Not much has been happening on my end, Laura sends her love and Emmy wants to see your wings but other than that, all's well.

I hope you enjoy the news as much as I have had reading it.

Love,

Remus

PS: I sent a pair of mittens over, it should still be quite chilly up there...

Harry smiled at the letter, and sighed in exasperation at the post script.

Opening the small cylindrical package, Harry turned it upside down.

A pair of mittens slid out causing a bit of paper to slide past the end of the tube.

Curiously, Harry pulled the paper out, only to stare in surprise at the multitude of pages being released.

He had news from every paper he had ever heard of... and some he had never known existed.

From "The Herald", to "The Sun"... though the page three's were missing for some reason.

On the top of the pile, which was dated the day after the... event; Harry was unsurprised to see his face on the cover; a still frame image taken from one of the video cameras.

The first headline... "Angels amongst us..."

Harry scoffed at the article, which was a load of religious tripe.

The second was a bit more reasonable and interesting to read. "A member of the 7800?"

It boiled down to the government's initial hesitation to referring to him as a member of their organization, and the government's explanation of the death eaters.

Apparently, some purists groups had sprung up to point out how measures must be taken to curb the group from posing a danger to decent folk everywhere.

Harry got the idea that Vernon Dursley probably would have gotten along just fine with those people who were being considered (thankfully) extremists.

...Although the attack had grown their numbers alarmingly.

The third article..."Harry Potter; Troubled delinquent."

Harry was a bit more agitated with that headline and article. They had apparently tracked him down to Surrey and taken some statements. This was an article from the Sun ... he was starting to view it as a rival to the prophet in his scorn. They even mentioned St Brutus by name...

The forth however... "St Brutus Denies Harry Potter's enrolment."

A smile played across Harry's face as he read the article about how St. Brutus had denied having Harry enrol in the school, only excepting students who have been enrolled by judicial process; enrolment being reserved for the particularly troubled cases. Harry, having been officially confirmed to have never had a criminal record of any kind, seemed to denounce that virulent rumour.

Harry smiled at that, thinking about how the Dursley's would have to explain this to their neighbours ...

Harry smiled as he read the next article.

"Family is confirmed to have slandered Harry Potter's name..."

Harry was openly beaming as he read an article about how the Dursley's had been confirmed to have started the rumours, and have openly been condemning the 'Hero' of the hour of being a no good punk. The family, being revealed to be his only living relatives, added further shame and condemnation. Apparently, they had taken

statements from a variety of sources, including his old teachers and neighbours.

The neighbours, he didn't care so much about except for Mrs. Fig's comment on how Harry was the most upstanding and delightful boy she had ever had the pleasure of meeting. The rest were sheep who went with the flow. But Harry's teachers were quite kind; while describing him as an odd lad who sometimes had strange things happen around him, he was described as quite shy and smart.

Harry planned to save the article for prosperity.

The next article was a bit more troubling though...

Apparently the news papers had discovered that Harry Potter was no where to be found... Anyone with information on the boy was to contact authorities as he was needed for testimony, and to answer some questions that had arisen.

The following papers continued to talk about him in relation to the 7800, the government using him as an example of the positive members of the group, to balance out the criticism from their critics.

If anything it would at least prove to be an interesting new year.... of that Harry was certain.

AN: Half of this chapter was written while I was sleep deprived, thus explaining the randomness of the beginning. The rest is just general filler.

I had plans for this chapter but for the life of me I can't remember what they are, and the plot having changed enough that I couldn't use my outline as a guide.

Anyway, a lot of hints for things to come. And I'd like to point out, that Shirley is free....

I've been quite neglectful of the little guy. He'll be around though, you'll see.

Anyway, till next time.

Quazi

Ps: I left a couple updated pictures in my deviant account, for those of you interested. They have to do with the story...

Chapter 27 – I've angered the Wrack Spurtles... Now bedlam must ensue!

'They didn't think I was being serious... they didn't think I would have my revenge...'

He watched from the shadows as his soon to be victims walked by.

He recognized almost every one of them. Each of them had humiliated him in their own way.

They degraded him... they laughed and giggled at him... but now was his time. Now was his time for revenge.

But first, he had one boy in mind.... He would be the first to feel his sweet, sweet poison coursing through his veins...

'The boy they called Harry Potter... will know death!'

... ..

Elsewhere:

Harry Potter was undergoing a monumental task... he had to focus otherwise all his work would be for not.

His opponent looked on gleefully, He watched as Harry's hand shook ominously... one wrong move and it would be a slaughter.

Harry was about to make a move when he hesitated.

Ron watched with wide eyes as Harry's hand shifted....

Harry smirked at Ron's reaction and took the rook; smugly.

Suddenly Ron's face twisted into a smirk of his own, causing Harry's smugness to falter.

Ron's hand shifted; in a move, that to Harry defied all the natural laws of physics... Ron cried out, "Check mate."

“What the hell...” Harry cried in disbelief as he lost yet again... three moves into the game at that.

“I think your getting worse at this game Harry,” Ron declared as he leaned back in his seat; watching Harry inspect the board for some kind of trickery.

Harry turned insulted eyes toward his friend before mumbling at him angrily.

“Come on... Transfiguration starts in a few minutes.” Ron announced happily, having chalked up another game of chess in his favour.

Harry scowled at his friend as he picked up his bag and followed the boy out of the common room.

... ..

‘He is close by...’ the vengeful being thought. He could taste his scent in the air. ‘He had walked this corridor not more than ten minutes ago...’

Sliding along a wall, he tried to stay hidden... for fear of being put back in his prison.

The scent was getting stronger. Not long now...

... ..

“I want you all in partners of two...”

Almost immediately, the class started to pair themselves off.

“Partners, I shall choose...” McGonagall announced with a withering stare.

There were a few mumbles of dissent but they waited for the pairing to commence.

“Mr. Longbottom and Ms. Patil.” McGonagall started, with a nod to the Gryffindor twin.

“Mr. Weasley and Ms. Patil...” To the other twin.

“Mr. Finnegan and Mr. Cornfoot...”

“Mr. Potter and Ms. Granger...”

The woman continued on her way seemingly pairing everyone off randomly. Harry wasn't fooled. The woman had encouraged him to partner off with Hermione on any and every occasion possible. From lack of seating, to spell work... no matter what, he always wound up next to his former friend.

At first it had been irritating; now it was just awkward.

Neither spoke any more words than necessary; furthermore, Harry thought that there was something off about the girl that he just couldn't place.

Harry stood up and pulled his things away from his desk, resigning himself to joining Hermione's up front.

Sitting down beside the girl and placing his book down, he nodded at her.

“Hermione...” Harry greeted politely.

“Harry...” She said as well, in an unusually meek voice.

Ever since she had returned from the winter break, she had avoided eye contact. That was odd for various reasons that were too numerous to explain. And this meekness was downright baffling. The last true conversation Harry had had with the girl had been a head on argument with her trying to stare him down...

Trying to put those thoughts out of his mind, Harry focused on the professor who he thought might have been observing them through all the chaos that was the students seating themselves once more;

somehow, organizing themselves so they were still seated close to their other friends.

Harry thought McGonagall looked disappointed for a moment before she washed that expression away as quickly as it had come.

“Alright class, proceed with the exercise. Remember, I want details on your assigned objects, so I expect each of you to keep working till you are dismissed for dinner.” McGonagall ordered; banishing a scrap of parchment to each pair.

Harry’s hand immediately rose upon instinct, and captured the piece of paper within the palm of his hand.

Putting the paper in between Hermione and himself, he opened and flattened it to reveal their assigned project.

Create a Muggle wind up Toy.

Requirements:

Made with at least 3 materials.

One of which must be wood, the other metal.

On the bottom was a diagram of a wind up mechanism.

Harry had to admit, the project sounded fun.

“What do you think we should make?” Harry asked. Looking up, Hermione stared at him for a moment, her mouth open with an idea, but suddenly she stopped and looked at Harry’s nose instead.

“Is there anything you want to make?” She asked.

Harry frowned for a second at her behaviour. “Not especially...” Harry didn’t want to admit that he hadn’t had any toy’s growing up, except for the ones Dudley broke or threw away.

She hesitated before pulling out a parchment and a quill.

She started to sketch a shape on it.

"I had a wind up bird once... It flapped its wings and flew." She explained.

"I think I remember what the mechanism looked like..." she said absently as she concentrated on her sketch.

Finishing with a flourish, Harry observed the drawing, it was relatively simple, and he could see how it worked in his head. There was an odd piston like object between the wings... it seemed to caused the wings to go up and down as it turned.

"The only problem is that my one was made with rubber and plastic; I don't know if we can make one that flies with metal and wood." She said downcast.

"No, we might still be able to. McGonagall never said how much of it had to be metal or wood." Harry said as he thought about it. "If we made the wings bigger and maybe out of paper... it could fly I think."

Out of the corner of his eye he could see Hermione give his back an inquisitive look. No doubt she was itching to ask about his own wings. He wondered if she suggested the flying bird model simply because of his wings.

Harry waited for it... but the question never came. She let her eyes wander back to the paper and suggested materials.

"Copper for the wing frame then?" she asked instead; indicating the front outline of the wings.

"Sure..." Harry said, somewhat taken aback at her behaviour. Putting But after a moment of quiet he put it out of his mind and focused on his work instead.

Harry conjured up small portions of the metals they needed. While Hermione worked on the wooden frame for the mechanism. Transfiguring the shape into slightly more intricate designs.

Harry conjured up small portions of the metals they needed, while Hermione worked on the wooden frame for the mechanism; transfiguring the shape into a progressively intricate design.

Together they worked on the wind up mechanism, Harry on the coil and Hermione on the improvised gear they were going to use for the piston.

In a move that Harry thought was quite ingenious, Hermione created a thin wooden shaft from the wind up coil to the manual winder. She smiled as it didn't snap when she gave it an experimental twist once it was connected to the mechanism. Harry had transfigured it with thin metal filaments inside the structure to give it some needed strength. Attaching the wings and transfiguring them to fit inside and attach to the complex piston. Hermione gave it another wind up.

The piston locked.

"Oh no..." Hermione said in panic. Looking at her watch, she saw that they were already in the last 15 minutes of the class.

"I'm sorry, Harry, I must have drawn the piston wrong... I was sure it was exactly like what I remember..." Hermione started. Looking up at the clearly panicking girl Harry stared at her confused. She was normally more level headed than this.

"Don't worry Hermione... I think we just have to fiddle with the piston..." Harry coaxed, trying to calm the girl down.

"Here..." Harry pointed his wand at the piston and used his magic to jiggle it within the mechanism.

"I think if we just shrink it...." Harry said while pointing his wand at it, watching as the thing ever so slightly started to shrink down.

Suddenly the piston started to move up and down rotating with the wind up mechanism.

The wing struts flapped up and down excitedly. Thankfully without the material covering it to give it lift....

“See, you remembered it... it works too.” Harry said with a smile.

Hermione beamed happily at the working toy.

Quickly mindful of the time they had. Harry conjured a sheet of thin paper. Slightly thicker than tissue paper. And Hermione affixed it to the wings. Hermione created a thin copper cage around the device that gave it a more aerodynamic shape; while also giving it a tail that swivelled.

Harry covered the tail in the same paper... and remembering McGonagall’s speech; added some colours and designs onto the paper, giving it a mock phoenix design... red and gold themed.

Smiling, at their finished craft, Hermione gently lifted it up and frowned.

“It’s still a bit heavy...” She admitted.

“Well let’s see if the wings work at least, if nothing else we should get marks for making a toy bird that flaps its wings...”

Nodding in agreement, Hermione wound it up, and let go of the knob.

Immediately, the mock bird’s wings came to life, flapping almost spasmodically. Blowing sheets of paper off their desk, and drawing the attention of the rest of the class.

Harry beamed at Hermione. She in turn, smiled quite pleased with their joint efforts.

“It’s still a tad heavy...” “She admitted, though she didn’t seem to mind as much as she would have earlier.

Harry heard soft footsteps approaching and turned to see Professor McGonagall making her way over to them.

She had a curious expression upon her face as she observed their creation.

“What’s this now...” She asked as she observed the bird as it slowly stopped flapping its wings.

“Professor...” Harry asked getting an idea. “Can we put a spell on our projects...?” Harry asked.

“What type of spell Mr. Potter?” McGonagall asked as she looked into the bird to see the mechanisms.

“Just something to lighten it... the project restrictions make it a little too heavy.” Harry immediately answered. Hermione looked up at Harry and turned to stare hopefully at her professor.

“I suppose it would be alright, but are you trying to tell me that this device will actually....” She looked at Hermione and Harry in surprise.

“Maybe...” Hermione admitted, but she seemed rather excited with the possibility of making it work fully.

Harry levelled his wand and placed the charm on the wind up mechanism as it was the heaviest component...

“A little lighter...” Hermione instructed, as she held the bird.

Slowly making the mechanism lighter, Harry continued until finally Hermione told him to stop.

Hermione ever so gently wound up the bird.

McGonagall watched with a critical eye while stepping aside.

Hermione stopped winding and looked at Harry...

Harry smiled at the girl nodding his head.

Nodding back, Hermione looked at the bird, faced it toward the empty front of the class room, and let go of the knob.

Immediately the bird's wings came alive and Hermione let go.

The bird jerkily lifted from her hand and raced forward. Curving around due to its tail and swooped over Harry's head as it flew at the rest of the class.

It crashed into the stone wall on the opposite end; crumpling up the front and bending a wing in the process... but it continued to twitch and flap its wings spasmodically on the floor.

Hermione beamed happily and practically squealed in joy before she jumped and hugged Harry in success.

Harry hugged her back in elation, before realizing what he was doing.

Hermione too, seemed to come to that realization; quickly letting go and looking from Harry to the floor.

They were saved from the awkwardness by McGonagall's declaration of, "Full Marks..."

"That was excellent work you two." McGonagall beamed.

She walked forward and picked up the bird as it gave a few feeble flaps.

Waving her wand at it, correcting the damage, she looked to the pair.

"Might I keep this, I would like to show the other sixth year classes..." McGonagall asked.

"Of course professor..." Hermione said immediately; immensely pleased that her teacher wanted to show off her project.

Harry nodded as well, though he palmed the diagram of the wind up mechanism... for later use.

Suddenly the bell tolled, announcing the end of classes and the start of dinner.

“Alright class... those of you who I have not had a chance to visit, please leave your finished projects on your tables with your partners name and a description of objects you have made; class dismissed.” McGonagall announced with an uncharacteristic smile upon her face.

Harry thought the woman was pleased about something, the smug features announcing to the world that she had achieved something grand.

... ..

‘The noise...!’ the stalker cried in pain.

The school bell had rung... never having heard it from the inside of the castle; he cringed in pain at its loudness.

How the humans could stand it was beyond him.

Suddenly the door to a class room opened wide; students poured out of it in droves as they headed away from him. He could feel the ground below him vibrate from the many footsteps... the vibrations carrying from other classrooms around the castle as well.

Shirley the Occamy flicked his tongue out and could sense its prey.

He’s close by.

Suddenly out of the door walked the bushy headed one... Where she came the other primate was sure to be.

Racing forward in excitement, Shirley leaped mouth open ready to strike...

... ..

A day earlier:

“Come in Hagrid...”

The door to Dumbledore's office swung open to reveal the hunched over figure of the groundskeeper; Rubeus Hagrid.

"Hello professor Dumbledore, sir..." Hagrid greeted as he tried to squeeze through the door built for people half his size; a remarkable feat for a man of his grandeur.

"Filius tells me that you have been helping Argus to repair the damage to the first floor corridor..."

"Yes sir, not too difficult now that I can use my umbrel... err... wand sir." Hagrid corrected.

"I'm sure Argus appreciates the help... tell me did you lock away the..."

"I've secured the Lemon drops sir... we won't be having another incident like we did during the summer." Hagrid assured the man.

Dumbledore smiled a pained smile. "I suppose that is good news then..." "Dumbledore remarked almost wistfully.

"Professor Dumbledore... sir; there's something else..." Hagrid stated reluctantly.

"Oh...?" Dumbledore asked curiously.

"Well you see sir, Shirley's cage... Um the occamy sir; well his cage was destroyed, and Shirley seems to have... escaped." Hagrid said haltingly.

"My, that is a problem...."

"Yes sir... I'm sure Shirley wouldn't hurt anyone, he's just scared is all; he positively adores Ms. Patil, I'm sure he's just looking for a friendly face is all." Hagrid defended.

"Yes, I'm sure..." Dumbledore started, not as confident in the snake's personality as Hagrid seemed to be.

“Well no matter, he will be bound to show up sooner or later... The handlers at the ministry assured me that special precautions had been taken in case of escape.”

“Special precautions sir...”

“The standard protocols for poisonous snakes around public places....” Dumbledore explained.

Hagrid frowned for a moment in concentration.... Then realization struck.

“Oh Shirley won’t like that at all....”

“Indeed...”

... ..

Harry sixth sense kicked in and he sensed something approaching him.

Quickly turning he had enough time to see the obscenely large, Occamy lunge at him.

Raising his arm to shield himself, but not managing to erect a magical one in time, Shirley clamped down upon Harry’s left arm.

Ron’s wand flew out to point at the snake, a spell on his tongue. A couple of students screamed in shock as they watched the boy who lived get bitten by the large magical serpent. Harry un-squinted his eyes to stare at the snake in surprise...

Raising his right arm to halt Ron, Harry spoke to the snake....

“Why are you sucking on my arm....?”

The snake blinked in confusion....

Its jaw opened and re-clamped on Harry's arm... once more... twice... three times.

Harry's arm was undamaged if not slightly wet.

Retracting its head, its jaws opened and the snake's tongue could be seen prodding its upper jaw curiously.

Harry looked to see what the reptile was doing, and couldn't hold his snort in, upon finding his explanation.

The occamy realized just as quickly.

"Those feces flinging apes removed my teeth!" It screeched in rage....

McGonagall came out of classroom to see what all the commotion was.

She stopped though when she came across the sight of a giant occamy who was thrashing in rage, directly in front of Harry Potter.

The boy in question hissed at the creature with a grin....

The snake seemed to snarl as best a snake could... Quickly launching at the boy, faster than she could react.... Its mouth opened and enveloped the boy's left hand.

"Mr. Potter...!" McGonagall cried in shock.

Instead of hearing the boy's pained cries from the attack, he calmly turned around to stare at his professor. "Ma'am?"

"What is the meaning of this...?" She asked in a rush, hurrying toward the boy while reaching for her wand.

Looking down at his arm... he watched as the snake slowly made its way up his arm... swallowing his limb a fraction of an inch at a time.

"I think he's trying to eat me ma'am..." Harry gave his arm an experimental shake...

Shirley didn't let go and clung to him as he shook his arm trying to dislodge the creature.

Feeling the inside of the snake Harry cringed...

"Gross..."

"If, you don't mind ma'am... I'm going to find Hagrid." Harry remarked.

McGonagall just stared at the boy as if he were insane.... He was being eaten alive for goodness sakes.

"Ron, you mind..." Harry indicated towards the lower end of the creature...

Ron slowly raised his wand and levitated the other end.

"Thanks mate..." Harry replied as he made his way out of the castle....one arm wiggling about in the air like some giant tentacle.

Shirley seemed to mumble something that sounded suspiciously like "I'm going to eat you... monkey..."

"Don't talk with your mouth full..." Harry scolded.

"Honestly...."

.....

Hagrid had managed to pull the snake off Harry's arm eventually. Shirley had managed to work his way up to his biceps by the time he had found the giant.

It had ended in a simple game of tug of war, in which the reluctant occamy had been pulled off Harry.

Once put back in his cage, Hagrid had scolded Shirley like he was some temperamental two year old, before thanking Harry for finding his snake. Hagrid never seemed to comment on the fact that the thing had tried to swallow Harry whole.

When Harry had asked about Shirley's fangs... Hagrid had admitted that they had been removed back in captivity and she only had glammoured versions inside her cage. He honestly couldn't understand why it was necessary... even after Harry had stared at the man incredulously.

Bidding the half-giant farewell, and mocking the snake on his way out.... Harry made his way to the great hall.

Sitting down next too Luna who was opposite Ron.

Harry reached out to give Luna a one armed hug in greeting but was stopped as the girl leaned back.

"Is that the arm that the snake tried to swallow?"

"Yes...?"

Luna cringed...using the handle of her spoon she nudged Harry's hand away from her...

"Wash that arm first...." She said in disgust.

Flipping her spoon around again she scooted away and went back to her pudding.

Ron looked on amused opposite her, a smirk on his lips as he continued to eat his custard.

"It's clean... I scorgified it." Harry poutingly remarked.

"Take soap to it first and then we'll talk." Luna retorted, as she spooned herself some more pudding.

"What, does my arm gross you out....?" Harry asked mockingly; reaching out, his arm hovered close to the girls face.

Luna scooted farther back, nudging Seamus as she tried to put distance between the two.

“Don’t you dare...” She warned; her spoon full of pudding was held out threateningly.

A mischievous smile made its way on Harry’s face, leaning forward with the back of his hand facing the girl, as if he planned to rub off whatever innards of the snake the girl thought was left, on her...

Within moments, Luna had reacted, and Harry found pudding splattering across his face.

“So Gross Harry...” Lavender cried in disgust... firmly in favour of Luna’s actions.

Ron just seemed to choke on his custard in laughter.

Hissing in what later he would realize was parseltongue... he cursed Shirley for ruining his day, as he sulkily wiped off pudding from his face.

... ..

Harry had woken the next morning, only to find a note on his dresser.

Opening it quickly Harry found a summons for his training. Same time and place... though the script was written in a different hand, that he didn’t recognize.

Slightly excited at starting up again, Harry had a spring in his step as he made his way to breakfast.

Turning a corner, he came face to face with Luna Lovegood she waited patiently for him by the entrance doors, to the great hall.

Before he could great her with a hug... she held out his hand indicating she wanted him to wait.

“You’re clean now, you used soap, right?” She asked mockingly.

“Yes...” Harry sighed in exasperation.

“Then you may proceed.” She allowed imperiously.

Rolling his eyes but still in a too good a mood, he hugged the girl and led her to the great hall.

“You planning any other night time escapades...?” Luna asked curiously as they found seats by a yawning Parvarti.

Parvarti looked at Harry with a quirked eye. He was sure this was going to add to the rumour mill sooner or later. Giving her a warning look which she ignored innocently, Harry huffed and cast a reverse silencio on her head, as he answered, “No I’m starting my training again tonight.”

Parvarti huffed in irritation as she fumbled for her wand to end the spell. “Not nice Harry...” She scolded.

Harry stared mockingly at her before noticing Luna’s quirked eye.

“You’re starting your....” Luna paused and looked to the girl on her left and to Parvarti’s scandalized surprise she recast the reverse silencio which Harry had just taught them in DA. Then, with the eaves dropper secured, she continued, “...training?”

“Oh, right... I’ve been sneaking out at night to get trained by” Harry explained in realization.

“Luna, how could you...” Parvarti asked indignantly; having finally removed the spell once more.

Harry wandlessly cast the spell yet again confusing Parvarti as she didn’t see any wands pointed at her to explain the spells reapplication.

Luna looked at Parvarti in surprise and then at Harry... “Did you just...?”

“I’ll explain later...” Harry announced while waving his wand visibly over Parvarti ending the spell.

“How’d you do that...?” Parvarti asked immediately.

“Do what?” Harry asked innocently as he took a sip of his apple juice.

“You cast the ... I...” Parvarti stuttered... becoming quite flustered with the situation.

“Are you okay Parvarti... You haven’t had the eggs have you?” Luna asked.

Parvarti stopped in confused worry. Her plate contained a half eaten egg sandwich.

“What’s wrong with the eggs?” She asked.

“It’s a Wednesday right...?” Luna asked.

“Yeah...?”

“Oh dear...” Luna said; she sympathetically patted the girl’s hand and went back to serving herself... steering clear of the eggs pointedly.

After Parvarti had traded her plate for a less controversial bowl of porridge, Harry had asked in a whisper, “There’s nothing wrong with the eggs is there...?”

“Only on Tuesday’s...” Luna confided with a smile.

... ..

“Why was Parvarti trying to get me, not to eat the eggs?” Ron asked in confusion as they made their way to defence.

“No clue...” Harry answered in mock bafflement.

Walking through the door’s into the defence classroom, Harry and Ron found a seat upfront.

“Tonks is still teaching right?” Ron asked.

Harry paused as he pulled his notebook out...

"Crap..." Quickly reaching for his wand he looked around the room in worry.

"What?" Ron asked in confusion, slowly reaching for his own wand as he searched the room for something suspicious.

Looking around the room in a way that would make Moody proud... Harry finally answered, with an equally paranoid, "Tonks is out to get me..."

Ron stared at the boy..." Why?"

"I threatened to tell everyone her first name...." Harry admitted.

Ron blanched. Taking a few scoots away from the boy he whispered harshly... "Are you mental... why would you do that?"

"I had my reasons..." Harry admitted reluctantly through gritted teeth.

Suddenly the office door to the front opened up wide revealing the very person they had been whispering about.

Tonks walked down the stairs imperiously, observing the students, and letting her eyes linger over Harry malevolently for a moment.

"Wotcher. Wands out everyone, today's going to be a practical lesson." She announced.

Harry didn't like the look in the woman's eyes... it reeked of mischief and vengeance.

He was afraid, very afraid.

... ..

"Maybe she forgot...?" Ron suggested optimistically.

“Maybe she’s just bidding her time...” Harry countered as he looked behind him cautiously.

The lesson had been surprisingly tame. Tonks had finished her review of what they had covered before and started them on the subject of spell modification. Simple stuff like making a Lumos glow a specific colour... or using an Accio to pull the caster toward the object instead of the other way around.

Tonks hadn’t even made one quip about his wings which Harry found suspicious.

“Probably... Anyway, I got herbology, Hope you make it to lunch...” Ron cheered optimistically as he bid the teen farewell.

Harry grumbled but let the comment slide. Deciding to head to the room of requirement, Harry took a left at the next intersection and made his way to the moving staircases.

He was about to take a step on the next stair well when he noticed a figure approaching him from the right.

She was a strictly dressed woman with grey hair and an alligator skin satchel. She caught Harry’s eyes and waved him over.

Cautiously, he approached the mysterious woman, but stopped a couple of steps away...

“Mr. Potter I presume...” She asked authoritatively in a deep rumbling voice. Her eyes automatically traveled up to his scar and back down to stare him in the eyes.

She extended her arm regally and Harry automatically reached out and shook it.

“Yes, I am, Ms...?”

“Hopkirk, Mafalda Hopkirk...” She answered.

“Hopkirk...?” Harry asked in slight confusion. He had heard that name before...

“I run the underage wizarding division of the ministry; I oversee records, apparition, special permissions, Exams...” The woman explained significantly.

Suddenly it struck. He had received a slew of letters from this woman, almost all having to do with his underage magic ‘misuse’.

Stiffening a little he put on a strained smile, wondering what she needed.

“Yes of course... What can I do for you ma’am?” Harry asked politely.

“You are unaware of why I am here...?” The woman asked with a quirked eye.

Starring at the woman in confusion, Harry searched his memory for any references to the her.

“I’m sorry; I don’t think anyone mentioned you...?” Harry said politely.

“Excellent...” The woman pronounced while pulling a clipboard out of her satchel and scratching a mark on it.

Harry starred at the woman in bewilderment.

Ms. Hopkirk put her clipboard away, and then commanded...

“Mr. Potter, if you would please accompany me to the Headmasters office...”

Harry didn’t have time to even respond to the order before the women had taken a right turn and proceeded towards Dumbledore’s abode.

Unwillingly, Harry followed... making sure to keep a good distance between himself and the woman.

They walked in uncomfortable silence, at least for Harry.

‘Am I in trouble with the ministry again?’ Thoughts of political plots and conspiracies were swimming around his mind. Was she some harbinger of ill will...? Was she the next Umbridge?!

Approaching the familiar gargoyle Harry hung back hoping to be free from the robotic woman. She unnerved him with her business like stature.

“Mr. Potter, if you would open the passage way for me...” Hopkirk demanded politely.

Harry was about to just step forward when he stopped to frown. Wouldn't Dumbledore have given the woman his password if he was expecting her... did he really want to grant access to Dumbledore's private domain; to a complete stranger no less.

“I'm sorry ma'am, but it's not my place to invite you into Professor Dumbledore's Office.” Harry stated hesitantly. Something about the woman was just wrong... He couldn't place it but he didn't trust her. Harry wondered if he was just being biased considering all the warnings she had sent... but he had learnt not to discount his instincts.

The woman's eye brow rose again, questioning whether Harry had just denied her entry.

“I can respect that, if you would announce my presence though... would that be possible Mr. Potter?” She asked in the same strict yet lifeless tones. She wasn't condescending or rude... she was polite and respectful. She didn't bluster or take any visible offence... Harry's mind whirled; trying to find reasons to reasonably deny the woman access but found none.

He was saved though by the shifting gargoyle, revealing the benign smiling form of Professor Dumbledore himself.

“Madame Hopkirk, Mr. Potter... please come in.” Dumbledore welcomed pleasantly.

Harry however immediately noticed his formal address. Hanging behind, Harry waited for the woman to enter first, before he followed... shooting Dumbledore a inquiring stare in the process.

Dumbledore didn't answer verbally, but his eyes quickly flashed to the woman and back significantly.

Harry was to be on guard... that was clear.

Harry heard the door close behind him and waited till Dumbledore requested they seat themselves.

Harry caught the eye of Amadeus, the portrait. He flashed him a reassuring nod not even bothering to pretend to be asleep.

"Madame Hopkirk... I was not expecting you specifically; it is a pleasure as always." Dumbledore started.

"Thank you headmaster Dumbledore." Hopkirk graciously answered.

Getting an odd sensation Harry's head tilted up to stare at the ceiling curiously.

It was as if a sudden scorching heat had appeared above him...

Unsure what was going on Harry turned his attention back to the two adults.

"How was your vacation, I understand the Carpathian Mountains are quite lovely this time of year?" Dumbledore stated curiously.

"Nothing special... I'm sorry to rush things but I have a schedule to keep and must be on my way soon." The woman stated politely.

"Of course..." Dumbledore acquiesced.

"I have reviewed your request and have assigned Mr. Potter a schedule for your perusal." She handed him a sheet of paper from her satchel, then digging out a piece of paper, she handed him another list.

“And here are the time tables for the available instructors.” She stated.

Feeling that he needed to make his presence known, Harry cleared his throat in a way that he hoped wasn't reminiscent of Umbridge...

“Sorry to interrupt, but a schedule?” Harry asked.

“So sorry Mr. Potter, I'm afraid that it is an old tradition amongst the education division of the ministry to keep the students involved unaware of things...” Dumbledore stated.

“I have petitioned for you to retake your history of magic examination and your addition into the fifth year O.W.L. exam for Ancient runes...” Dumbledore answered.

“Fifth year O.W.L.'s?!” Harry asked in shocked surprise.

It was far too soon to even be considering those... he was still covering the forth year material... how was he expected to catch up to the fifth years in time.

“Yes I'm afraid the board of governors are pushing for a rather short study period. In late July you will be expected to have completed a standard fifth year O.W.L. for the subject of ancient runes. If I may ask, how far have you progressed in your studies...?”

Harry was about to admit how far behind he was before his eyes were drawn to the woman on his left. She shifted in her seat, her satchel raised onto her lap.

“I'm sorry to interrupt but I must be going, please forward the appropriate forms to my office.” Hopkirk stated.

“Of course... I am sorry to have kept you, shall I escort you out?” Dumbledore asked politely.

“No, I will find my way; you may proceed with informing Mr. Potter of his time table.” The woman stated briskly while standing up quickly and offering her hand for a farewell shake.

Dumbledore took the hand and seemed to shake it a second or longer than necessary before he allowed the woman to escape.

Once the door had closed Dumbledore immediately waved his wand at the window, opening it. Then the wand swung in a familiar movement at the new opening.

Suddenly an ethereal phoenix shot out from his wand only to swoop out the window and down below.

In a burst of fire directly above Dumbledore's right shoulder, a true phoenix appeared, screeching wildly in a very agitated way.

"Shh... there, there Fawkes, I know...." Dumbledore soothingly mumbled toward the bird.

"I take it you were watching...?" Dumbledore asked rhetorically.

Fawkes let out a less aggravated croon, calming down under the mans ministrations.

Harry was very confused.

"Sir...?"

"I am sorry Mr. Potter, what must you be thinking..." Dumbledore apologized, while sweeping his wand over the chair Hopkirk had sat in moments earlier.

"I am afraid things are not as they appear..." Dumbledore stated mysteriously as he went around his desk to seat himself.

Fawkes crooned once more before hopping off his desk and over toward Harry.

Harry automatically scratched the bird behind in places Hedwig had liked and listened to Dumbledore's explanation.

Dumbledore observed Fawkes for a moment as he calmed down before starting.

"I am afraid, 4 weeks ago; I received intelligence that Madame Hopkirk had died in an automobile accident." Dumbledore stated blankly.

Harry blanched a little at the morbidity of it all.

"I'm sorry sir, I don't understand." Harry stated, wanting Dumbledore to spell it out for him.

"The woman, who entered my office today, was not Madame Hopkirk, I am afraid someone is masquerading as Mafalda for reasons I do not completely understand." Dumbledore admitted in frustration.

"Poly juice potion?" Harry asked.

"Most likely, it would explain her eagerness to leave..." Dumbledore agreed.

"What is curious though... is that the person masquerading as Mafalda Hopkirk today... was under the imperious curse." Dumbledore stated.

"Imperious? How do you know...?" Harry asked in confusion.

"I have modified Hogwarts wards over my tenure, and the readings I was getting from them were very consistent. They are not fool proof, but they are a fairly good indicator... What bothers me is that the person masquerading as Madame Hopkirk was not instructed to take precautions to hide the fact..." Dumbledore stated in puzzlement.

Harry too was baffled, and disturbed. He had just spent the last half hour with a person masquerading as a dead woman.

"Sir... if you know, why is she being allowed to leave?" Harry asked reluctantly. There was probably a tactically sound reason for the decision... but Harry was still curious.

Dumbledore stared at Harry for a moment inquiringly.

“Would you have detained her Harry?” He asked curiously.

‘Was this a test...?’ Harry wondered.

“I’m not sure, I was just curious. I suppose letting her wander free could be beneficial, in certain circumstances...?” Harry stated unsurely.

Dumbledore smiled in amusement. “Do not worry Harry; I am just curious as to your reasoning... I so rarely get to confide my strategic moves with non order members. And they are all fairly similar in their though thought processes...” Dumbledore admitted ruefully.

“Please, I am quite interested...” Dumbledore beseeched while leaning back in his seat.

A little startled that Dumbledore wanted to know his opinion on his military move... Harry unsurely answered.

“Um, well I am assuming that you wanted to have her followed, is that what the Patronus was...?”

“Indeed, it was a short message to the Order members close by, I instructed them to keep her watched.” Dumbledore admitted pleased that Harry had figured it out.

“Right, well, I just figured that by letting her get away, while it might lead to gaining more information, you also have a greater likely hood of loosing her, or maybe it could be a diversion and whoever is pulling her strings may be trying to identify your order members and where they are stationed... of course you probably already know this.” Harry stated rhetorically, feeling like an utter cad for questioning Dumbledore’s decision.

Dumbledore stopped to pause... “Interesting...”

Harry wasn’t sure whether that was a good thing or not.

“So you would advise that I have the order members capture her immediately then?” Dumbledore asked.

“I... I don't know...” Harry admitted, unsure what the best solution was.

Dumbledore smiled amusedly down at the boy.

“Welcome to my world Harry... I'm afraid confusion is quite rampant here.” Dumbledore stated tiredly.

... ..

Harry had spent the next half hour in Dumbledore's office. Dumbledore had never explained his reasoning for not capturing Hopkirk, but he did fill Harry in on some other less exciting news.

Harry was to be tested at random intervals by a select few instructors to evaluate his level in potions, to make sure that he was studying and therefore, eligible to be enrolled in the Newt examination for that subject.

Also at the end of the year, Harry would be expected to write his O.W.L. for fifth year runes.

Dumbledore had admitted that it was not an ideal amount of time for Harry to get caught up in the subject but he seemed encouraged by the progress Harry had made so far, which Harry thought was quite lacking in his opinion. If he had known he was expected to be prepared to write an exam for the subject at the end of the year he would have spent more time on it.

Also to be expected to have covered three years of the subject within just one... Harry thought it royally unfair.

Dumbledore did not deny that when Harry voiced his displeasure in the situation.

History of magic though, he was expected to write that exam within a month. Harry wasn't worried so much about that, as he just didn't care for the subject at all.

But he would endeavour to go through his notes over the next few days.

This conversation lead back to Hopkirk, as Dumbledore was to select which instructor would be the officiator for Harry's retake.

Dumbledore had confided that he was worried, as each name on the list was someone he trusted. Apparently there were quite a few possible instructors that were not listed, not all of them as trustworthy as the seven that he was being allowed to pick.

It troubled Dumbledore for reasons that he would not elaborate on, that those seven had been hand picked and delivered by the dead director.

That had lead to another round of theorizing which left Harry's head hurting from the possible threats that the man had concocted.

If Harry was to take anything away from the encounter, it was that Dumbledore was a truly paranoid man, he was just better at hiding it than Moody.

... ..

Elsewhere:

Hermione starred transfixed at her notes, a frown on her face as she tried to comprehend the equations she had been given for arithmancy.

Running her pen (she had stolen a few from home) over the equation, she tried to follow the circular logic.

Feeling a thump on her right, she looked over to Ron as he seated himself beside her.

"I can't feel my ears..." Ron cried in defeat.

“You can’t feel your...?” Hermione mouthed in bafflement. “What?”

“You heard me... Seamus fired off one of the twins new pranks.” Ron explained despondently.

“They made a prank that makes your ear’s go numb...?” Hermione asked sceptically.

“No... It makes whatever part that it hits go numb... they were aiming for my legs but they missed and nicked my ears.” Ron stated.

“How long does it last?” Hermione asked slightly amused.

Ron shrugged... “What are you up too?”

Pointing tiredly with her pen at her notes... “Arithmancy.”

Ron frowned... “You don’t look too enthused... I thought Arithmancy was your favourite subject.”

“It was, but it’s starting to sound more and more like divinations... so many strange conclusions are reached by the most obtuse information... its completely ridiculous.” Hermione huffed in agitation.

“If you dislike it so much, why are you studying it...?” Ron asked curiously.

“I’ve stuck it out this long; I might as well get my NEWT...” Hermione stated reluctantly.

Ron leaned back in his chair... seemingly struck dumb by Hermione’s words.

“I never thought I’d live to see the day... Hermione Granger doesn’t want to study.” Ron teased.

Hermione sent him a withering stare while lightly flinging her pen at the boy.

“Prat...” Hermione retorted... though the sting had been taken out of her words.

Ron smiled as he caught the pen.

Hermione watched as Ron's eye focused on the writing implement, a question on his lips... He was about to ask when Hermione turned and caught sight of the portrait hole opening.

With his back turned a messily haired figure walked into the room.

Panicking, Hermione quickly leaned over to look through her bag.

Ron watched the girl with a frown... flipping between his room mate and the girl who was trying to be unseen.

Harry turned to and caught sight of Ron, giving him a friendly wave as he made his way up the stairs to their dorm. Ron sparred him an equally friendly nod but focused on the girl beside him.

“Are you hiding from Harry?” He asked in confusion.

“What... no, I was just looking for some whiteout....” Hermione said quickly... pulling out a white plastic bottle from her bag.

Ron didn't buy it...”What's going on, I thought you were fine with Harry now?”

“I am fine with Harry...” Hermione defended evasively.

Hermione's head swivelled as she heard footsteps coming down the stairs... Panicking again she 'accidentally' dropped her white out.

Ron watched the girl with an incredulous stair.

Looking over at the stairs, Ron watched as Colin walked down, dragging behind him his school bag.

“You can get up, it's only Colin...” Ron said sardonically.

Crossing his arms Ron starred at the girl waiting for her to spill.

Hermione slowly got up again; a red tinge to her cheeks told Ron all he needed to know.

“Well...?” Ron asked.

“Its nothing, I’m just taking things slow, is all...” Hermione admitted reluctantly.

“You mean you’re just putting it off. Have you even talked to Harry yet?” Ron asked.

“Of course Ron...” Hermione defended indignantly...

“If you say during class I’m going to have the twins jinx your books....” Ron warned.

Hermione’s features twisted into an irritated frown... “There’s no need to rush things... I’m just giving Harry his space for now.” Hermione said ignoring Ron’s threat.

Ron rolled his eyes in exasperation. “Just say you’re sorry, and get it over with... the longer you let this thing go, the harder it will be to patch things up...” Ron advised sagely.

“I will, just not now...” Hermione reiterated. She didn’t want to admit that she knew she was just scared to initiate the conversation. She feared that Harry would reject her again. She didn’t think she could take being rejected again...

Ron huffed.

“Fine, but if you think I’m going to relay messages between you two then your mental...”

“I had to relay messages between you and Harry in Forth year...” Hermione reminded the boy indignantly...

“Yeah, but I have the emotional range of a teaspoon... I can get away with it.” Ron reminded the girl charmingly.

Hermione could only roll her eyes at the boy... praying that someone would give her strength.

... ..

Harry had taken a few moments after dinner to fill Luna in on his training... he planned to fill Ron in at a later date. He hadn't gone into a lot of details but he had explained why he had been so tired and busy most of the year.

Luna seemed to accept it, thinking that getting trained sounded like a good idea. Harry had been worried that she might have wanted to train with him. As much as Harry liked the girl, he liked to train alone, it was one of those things that he liked to do alone. He didn't object so much to Luna learning to defend herself... he just didn't want to train with the girl.

He needed that separation, if only to know where his personal life started and hers began.

Harry was currently making his way toward the great hall. The day had been long and semi-eventful; but he was ready to start his training again.

Pulling his wand out... Harry entered the pitch black room.

Casting a Lumos, Harry spotted a cloaked figure at the other end of the room.

“Professor Dumbledore...?” Harry asked unsurely...

The figure didn't say anything for a few moments; instead, the person seemed to shrink slightly as it turned around...

Unclasping the cloak and pulling back the hood, the trainer finally answered.

“You wish...” The violently purple haired Auror replied malevolently.

Harry gripped the handle of his wand just a little tighter... suddenly wishing Luna were there; if only as back up against the sadistically gleeful metamorph.

AN: Ok this chapter was hard to write for various reasons... I haven't even had a chance to do a lot of editing on this myself or send it to my beta, as I've been running behind. Exams are starting this week so yeah.

Sorry to everyone, I haven't replied to your reviews yet though I did read them all. Expect a reply soon. And wow, that's a lot of reviews... I remember the day's when I was happy receiving just two... Thanks everyone who took the time to write.

I'm currently adding a few details to my outline as I wrote my self a little gap in time between now and the end of fic... have to plan it out before I start the next chapter.

I can't promise a chapter next Friday, but at least by the Friday after.

Anyway, till next time...

Quazi

Chapter 28 – On a very special episode of Blood tipped....

“Come now Harry.... They told me you were good...” Tonks cried cheerfully from the centre of the room.

Harry panted as he ran around the Great hall for the thirty second time...

He looked at the women with scorn... sweat dripping off his forehead.

“I ... Hate... You!” Harry cried out haltingly...

“Flirting with me will only get you more laps...” Tonks warned cheerfully.

Harry spared the women one last glare...

Any hope or dream that Harry had had that the Auror would be professional about his training... They were no more.

Tonks held grudges... Even for the slightest of things.

Harry’s threat of telling everyone her true name had earned him his most horrendous of all training regimen.

Harry had, under Sir’s reign, had to dodge spells, avoid being bludgeoned by objects of varying weight and bluntness, rendered unconscious frequently, or even sustained moderately painful wounds...

Tonks however was worse.

She had introduced him to something that was so diabolical; Satan himself had reserved a level of hell just for her.

What was her obscenely evil plan... her foulest of orders...?

Laps...

Harry had not managed to completely hide his derisive scoff when she had ominously declared the practice... that was his second mistake.

The women had given him eight laps around the great hall... Harry had been able to handle that. He was used to running due to his childhood with his oh so wonderful cousin.

When the metamorph had realized that, she had decided to increase his laps by ten.

Then another ten... and another...

Tonks had stopped at 38.... Deciding that Harry had been suitably winded. After which the women would get up and start attacking the aching boy.

Harry's job was to stay conscious... each time he failed in this... he would have to do another 10 laps before he could escape to bed.

To add insult to injury...

"That's lovely Chippy... Thank you." Tonks complimented pleasantly as she sipped from her fruity concoction in the centre of the room. She always brought her infernal swivel chair...

Always watching Harry, always spinning, always drinking some obscenely colourful drink while Harry ran laps dripping in his own sweat...

"Thank yous mams..." Chippy stated uncertainly. As an original Order elf, the little being could not avoid following the woman's orders.

This had become necessary when it became clear that all the other house elves were simply incapable of 'not' aiding the clearly pained boy.

Tonks had to order Chippy not to serve Harry while running. Something she agreed to under protest.

Dobby had been the best though... every now and then the elf would appear when Tonks wasn't looking, and like a ninja, would quickly spray a steady stream of water into Harry's mouth, dab at his forehead, and freshen his clothes before vanishing just as quickly as he had come.

The elf was very skilled... Harry endeavoured to carpet bomb his saviour with socks in gratitude.

"You know... thirty eight is a fairly random number... lets bring it up to an even forty..." Tonks suggested cheerfully.

She conjured an ataman and leaned back in her chair as she sucked on her drink. The ataman spinning in sync with her as she watched Harry run around the obscenely large room.

He would pay doobby back... if he survived that was.

... ..

"Ow..ow... ow...ow.. Ow..."

Luna looked at the boy in worried confusion... he was only trying to sit down after all.

"Are you okay...?"

Harry finally sat; giving off a content moan as he relaxed into his seat.

"I'm fine..." he answered blissfully.

Giving the boy an odd look, Luna poured herself a cup of juice... pouring the boy one as well since he seemed so unbearably comfortable in his stillness.

Sliding the glass over to him she asked...

"Wrackspurtles...?"

Harry looked at the girl for a moment... a puzzled frown marring his face.

"You know... I still don't know what wrackspurtles are?" Harry asked curiously.

"Invisible chaos turtles..." Luna answered immediately.

"Chaos turtles...?" Harry asked.

"Invisible Chaos Turtles..." Luna corrected pointedly.

"Opposed to the visible ones..." Harry asked.

"That's silly Harry, there's no such thing as a visible chaos turtle..." Luna laughed charmingly.

"What's this about chaos turtles....?" Ron asked as he took a seat opposite Harry.

"There is no such thing as a visible Chaos turtle..." Harry answered unsurely.

Ron gave the boy a stare then swivelled his head to Luna who was nodding her head knowledgeably...

For a moment he looked like he wanted to comment... but he thought better of it and instead forked himself some bacon.

Deciding to take the Ron route... Harry proceeded to enjoy his breakfast. All the while wondering if Luna was serious or not...

It being a Saturday... Ron asked the inevitable, "What's your plan for today...?" question.

Harry proceeded to shock the boy though when he answered, "Studying..."

"But it's Saturday..." Ron reminded him in horror.

"No choice... I have to do the history owl again in less than two weeks." Harry answered sullenly.

"History...? Why?!" Ron questioned... seemingly insulted by the statement.

"Dumbledore convinced me to; beginning of the year..." Harry answered despondently, with a hint of resentment laced between his words.

"But it's history... No one takes history... Hermione doesn't even take history..." Ron protested.

It was true... after fifth year... no one, despite their grades ever took the class. There were a few... but the number of students, past fifth year, who were enrolled in the subject could be counted on both of Harry's hands... an unusually large number, as generally, it would take only one hand.

"I know..." Harry remarked sorrowfully. Ron's reminders weren't making him exactly cheerful.

Ron spared the boy another look... seeming to sympathise with his plight.

"Well if you don't care... does it matter how well you do? I don't think your vying for Binn's job..." Ron asked hesitantly.

Ron paused and looked over at Luna...

"What?"

"Well, its just... you're a Ravenclaw..." Ron admitted with a frown... expecting some kind of recrimination for advising Harry to do less than his best.

Knowing what Ron meant, Luna casually mentioned, "I dropped history in third year so I could take divinations, ancient runes, and care of magical creatures... I didn't want a large course load."

“You can drop history...?” Ron asked in shock... scandalized that no one had told him this earlier.

“Professor Binn’s wasn’t fond of my theories...” Luna remarked evasively.

Instead of asking the girl to elaborate Ron decided to get back on subject...

“Right, well there you go. Study, but don’t kill yourself over it. It’s not like you need an OWL in history...” Ron advised.

An annoying voice in Harry’s head condemned Harry for being swayed by the teen’s words. Reminding him that he should give it his all, that he should not slack off; that part was shushed though by the other part of his mind...

Harry could practically see the figurative angel and demon on his shoulders, advising him.

The angel spouting off sayings like, ‘Those who fail to learn history are doomed to repeat it.’

The more laid back, devil would coax him with well planned arguments and subtle nudges, persuading him with guile; such as crying ‘Come on...’ in a laughable manner.

Its argument was very persuasive, clearly well thought out and logical...

Reluctantly though, Harry answered, “I should really study...”

Ron looked at the boy disappointedly...

“You’ve changed...” he stated sadly.

Grabbing a handful of bacon and slapping them together between some bread, Ron stood and with a final patronizing look, turned his back on the boy.

“Don’t worry Harry; that was a very responsible choice...” Luna praised comfortingly.

“Thanks... you want to study with me then?” Harry asked hopefully.

“Not a chance...” Luna answered immediately.

Patting his hand sympathetically she finished off her juice and gave the boy a chaste parting kiss on the cheek as she walked out of the great hall cheerfully.

Harry sulked moodily ...

‘Doing the right thing sucks...’

... ..

Harry had spent an agonizing eight hours going through his notes from last year. He was lucky he didn’t leave them behind, and a quick stop in the library had allowed him to borrow the text’s necessary.

Even still... as he sat on his bed trying to decipher dates and names... he couldn’t help but look out his window; to the soggy slush filled world outside.

The grey skies... the muddy cold ground. The lifeless tree’s...

It was a testament to how much he hated studying the subject that he wanted to frolic in the dreary late January weather.

Soon though, he was reminded by his room mates that he had a DA meeting to start.

Even though he preferred DA to studying history, it did require quite a bit of moving around; and that was painful for the boy considering the hell that was Tonk’s regime.

Deciding to skip the start up attack, he instead had the students review the spells they covered last time... claiming that next week they would return to their usual routine...

... ..

Ending early... Harry shooed the students away. Deciding he needed a hot bath, Harry waved aside Ron and Luna's worries as he made his excuse to leave.

He had been too tired the day before yesterday to make his way up to the fifth floor and had suffered the consequences the day after... unfortunately the day after, the bathroom had been occupied and he had to trudge back to the Gryffindor dorms smelly and tender. The Standard bathing facilities, inadequate for his needs, and likely to alert his year mates.

Turning a corner toward the bathroom, with the password on his lips... Harry was ready to take an unmanly, warm, bubble bath to soothe his tired muscles.

He was to be stopped though by familiar, intriguing, whispers...

"... And I should help you because?"

"Because it is your lords wish..." A familiar haughty voice answered back.

"Your lord, not mine... And he never came to me asking for my help... I'm not about to put my self at risk for nothing..."

"So your siding with the Mudbloods and blood Traitor's then...." Malfoy's indignant tones, snapped coldly.

"Oh do shut up Draco... Do you really think I'm that simple...? You want my help... give me something for it." The familiar voice replied condescendingly.

Intrigued, Harry waved his wand around himself in sweeping motions; trying to detect a hint of foreign magic in the air. They had covered the basics of the detection spells before Christmas, but with Harry's added sensitivity, he had found that he was particularly adept at it;

picking up on some of the more subtle magic's that were easy to overlook.

He was not to be disappointed though; detecting a thin perimeter charm mere feet away.

Marking his boundaries... Harry disillusioned himself and walked just outside the perimeter alarms wake. It was a mobile one, attached to the wizard in general so he had to be careful if the person moved.

Walking around a corner, mindful of the charm, Harry found Malfoy and Nott walking away in heated debate. Heated on Malfoy's side at least... Nott seemed to be enjoying himself as the boy beside him became infuriated....

"What do you want...?" Malfoy grudgingly demanded.

"What are you offering?" Nott asked with a smirk. The boy stopped abruptly as Malfoy whirled on him...

For a moment Harry thought Malfoy would have tried to bear his wand down upon the Slytherin... but he reigned in his temper.

"You can Copy my potions Essay..."

Nott Laughed derisively....

"You want me to help you do something for the Dark Lord for a chance at copying your potions essay... Goodbye Malfoy." Nott chuckled amusedly... turning about face and walking toward Harry.

Harry's sensitivity was kicking in and he could feel the perimeter charm approaching him.

It was planted on Nott...

Taking a few quick steps back, Harry tried to avoid making contact and alerting the boy's to his presence. He was thankful for the low lighting otherwise the moving distortions would be easier to pick up.

“Wait...” Malfoy commanded in agitation.

Nott thankfully complied, mere inches away from causing Harry to reveal his presence as he had trapped himself between the charm and a suit of armour.

Giving himself a generous amount of space between him and the charms barrier, in case Nott tried that again, Harry watched Malfoy’s conflicted features.

“A hundred Galleons...”

“I’m not interested in your money, unless you’re willing to raise that amount substantially.”

“Then what do you want...” Malfoy whispered harshly.

“I want your blood, nothing less.” Nott answered smugly.

Harry got the impression the boy was being literal.

Malfoy blanched...

“500 Galleons...”

“No...”

“A thousand...” Malfoy grunted.

“I have more than that in my trust vault... my offer isn’t too bad, a few teaspoons is all I ask.” Nott replied charmingly.

“You’re mad if you think I’ll give you my blood, I’ve heard the rumours...” Malfoy scornfully rebutted.

“Then you have nothing to offer me as far as I can tell... Good luck on your little project.” Nott teased.

“Wait...” Malfoy shouted.

“Shush, fool...!” Nott whispered angrily, breaking his aloof charming mask for the first time that evening.

Malfoy ignored the aggressive tones, seemingly fighting an internal battle.

“15 000 Galleons and not a Knut more...”

Nott paused... Harry knew that was a ridiculous amount of money... even for some one like Malfoy to give up.

“I suppose that would be acceptable... but you could keep your money for just a spoonful of...”

“No...” Malfoy interrupted; latching on to the acceptance...

Malfoy rushed forward into the boy’s face... “You’ll get your money, I expect you to deliver your side of the bargain...”

Nott gave the boy a mocking stare, taking a dignified step back.

“Of course... once I am paid that is...” Nott stipulated.

Malfoy’s eye twitched in aggravation. Instead of answering he reached into his robe and tossed the boy what appeared to be an empty vial.

“Those weren’t easy to come by... Don’t waste them.” And with that... Malfoy abruptly turned and headed away.

Nott watched the boy vanish around the corner... turning around he brought the vial up and observed it with a critical eye.

Harry couldn’t see into the vial clearly, whatever it was must have been tiny... he wished he could take a step closer, but didn’t want to risk being caught in case...

In case...?

What was stopping him? They were clearly up to something for Voldemort... whatever Malfoy had just paid for had been incredibly important... and Harry doubted he would have to risk getting a detention.

Deciding, Harry willed a suit of armour on the opposite side of the hallway to clang and creak with a low powered, mined, percussive blast.

Nott immediately shifted upon hearing the noise and tried to conceal the vial.

That was Harry's cue as he summoned the object toward the clanging armour away from him.

Nott immediately raised his wand and tried to hold on to the vial. Shooting off a banisher and a decidedly unfriendly cutter at the area Harry was projecting his magic.

Harry let the summoner fail, and watched as Nott's arm swung towards him; the vial in his clutches.

Harry ran forward, closing the distance between the two. Harry could feel the perimeter charm activating; Nott's head swinging in surprise towards Harry's direction.

All Nott saw before he was engulfed in a point blank stunner, was a moving distortion rushing him in the darkness...

Not believing how easy that had been, Harry waved his wand around him trying to detect something or someone else...

Finding nothing, Harry carefully pried open the boy's hands, revealing the vial below his fingers.

Picking it up gently, as this vial was worth 15000 galleons, Harry observed the contents...

Several strands of hair were present, thirteen strands in total... Some brown, others a familiar red, but one an uncomfortable blonde. Not liking the possibilities, Harry clung to the vial tightly.

Looking down at the stunned boy he wondered whether he should take him with him...

Deciding against that, Harry spotted a convenient broom closet and stuffed the unconscious boy inside.

Re-stunning him to be on the safe side... Harry shut and locked the door.

Walking purposefully and hurriedly, Harry made his way to the familiar gargoyle and onto the revealed stairwell behind it.

Stopping behind the door, Harry stopped to contemplate his actions.... He had just attacked and stolen from a student... Snape would have a field day.

Resigning himself, Harry knocked on the door loudly and calmly...

Waiting a few moments, Harry was about to knock again, but heard Professor Dumbledore's quite voice beckon him, asking him to, "Come in..."

Opening the door, Harry spotted the headmaster making his way down from the stairwell to his private chambers. He was apparently preparing for bed as he had already changed into what Harry recognized as unreasonably colourful sleeping robes.

"Harry, what brings you here at this time...? Please sit." Dumbledore asked quickly upon spotting the boy.

Instead of heading toward the indicated chair, Harry Walked toward the man and held out the vial.

Dumbledore curiously stepped off the steps and reached out for the offered vial.

“Can I use your Pensieve...? It'll be easier to just show you my memory.” Harry asked.

“By all means...” Dumbledore invited taking his eyes off the contents of the vial to observe the boy.

“Thanks...” Harry said distractedly.

Closing his eye's as Dumbledore retrieved the pensieve... Harry recalled the events of the night with his wand raised to his temple.

Upon feeling the mental snap, Harry pulled the memories away from his head and flicked them into the bowl that now lay before him.

“Will you be joining me...?” Dumbledore asked.

“I think I'll sit this one out...” Harry stated, sitting down tiredly in the chair.

Dumbledore nodded while placing the vial on the desk in front of Harry.

Swinging his beard over his shoulder and holding onto his hat, Dumbledore dipped his head into the bowl and was sucked into the event.

Looking around the office Harry wondered if any student had ever spent as much time as he did in the Headmaster office.

Letting his eye's wander, Harry's vision fell upon the portraits who were all pretending to be asleep to varying degree's of success.

“I know you're awake...” Harry addressed sarcastically.

One or two of the portraits cautiously opened their eyes sheepishly.... A few others pretended even harder, scrunching up their faces, trying to really sell their supposed unconsciousness...

“Why do you guy's even pretend...” Harry asked curiously.

"It's something to do..." A nameless portrait announced.

Rolling his eyes at the answer, Harry turned fully to face the paintings... wanting some company as Dumbledore watched his questionable actions.

Speaking of said actions... "What brings you here Mr. Potter...?" Headmaster Gripits asked, cutting through the noisy chatter of the other portraits.

"Just showing Dumbledore how I stunned and stole from a fellow student a few minutes ago..." Harry answered bluntly.

There was a moment of silence as the portraits comprehended Harry's words.

"I take it there is more to your tale than that...?" Charlene Gripits asked in a sternly amused fashion.

"A bit... yes." Harry answered cheekily.

"Well do entertain me Mr Potter..." Gripits invited.

Harry, deciding he had nothing better to do, gave an abbreviated breakdown of events... mentioning prices, suspected motives and other such things... ending with Harry's attack and incapacitation of the boy in question.

Once finishing, the only thing the portrait could say to that was....
"Never a dull moment with you... is their Mr. Potter?"

"Apparently not..." Another voice answered from behind Harry.

Turning around, Harry saw the tall figured of Professor Dumbledore as he took a seat behind his desk; somehow escaping the pensieve without ever having alerting Harry.

"Sir..."

“Harry... You do realize that that was a very risky move? Had Mr. Nott caught a glimpse of you or had he turned more lethal spells upon you... we would not be here having this conversation.” Dumbledore admonished.

“Yes sir...” Harry agreed semi repentantly.

“Very well...” Dumbledore stated; sparring Harry one last firm stare before letting his lips twitch.

“Do you have any theories or anything else to add...?” Dumbledore invited.

“I think those hairs are from Ron or Ginny, Hermione, and probably Luna as well. Could they be trying to brew Polyjuice...?” Harry suggested.

“That would seemingly fit... but I believe for 15000 galleons, Mr. Malfoy could brew his own Polyjuice...” Dumbledore admitted.

“What intrigues me is the fact that Mr. Malfoy went to Mr. Nott. The Nott family has had quite a few unsubstantiated rumours surrounding them...” Dumbledore stated cryptically.

“Sir...?” Harry asked.

“Tell me Harry, have you ever heard of Voodoo?” Dumbledore asked.

“As in Chicken bones, zombies and Dolls?” Harry asked unbelievably.

“Yes, though I do not know of any spell or charm that uses Chicken bones...” Dumbledore admitted a little flummoxed.

“And Nott... the sixth year Slytherin, who I just stunned in less than a minute, knows how to do Voodoo?” Harry asked unbelievably. Harry thought that anyone who could claim such a random skill would be a bit more of a challenge.

“No, it is doubtful that young Mr. Nott knows very much in the craft... though he may know some. It is his Aunt that is the true master... or

so the rumour goes. Do not be fooled, Voodoo is a very powerful and selective practice. Thankfully those capable of performing it are few and secretive. Much like Parseltongue... the ability to dabble in this area of magic is highly frowned upon." Dumbledore explained.

"It is an area of magic dealing with individuals... A practitioner can with the right tools, materials, and knowledge, enchant a person to do whatever it is they wish."

"They can bring a person to the brink of death or strengthen them to the level of a Demi God. Mentally trapping them into their own minds creating almost soulless husks, willing to do the practitioners bidding... I suspect this is the magic that Mr. Malfoy sought tonight." Dumbledore stated quietly.

Harry starred in horror at the vial...

"And he could have done that to..." He left the sentence unfinished as he stared at the vial in revulsion. Wanting to smash and burn its contents immediately.

"It is doubtful; such magic requires tremendous resources and the willing donation of each person's sample." Dumbledore assured.

"Willing..."

"Whoever these hairs belong to, the owner would have had to have willingly parted with them... and I do not see Mr. Malfoy eliciting such trust and generosity from your friends."

"So it's not, Voodoo..." Harry stated in relief.

"We can not rule it out... the Nott's are the only family suspected in Britain that are both capable and knowledgeable to practice it. I myself am not well versed in the area of magic, and it would be impossible for me to even attempt the magic, though I will make every effort to discover what the purposes of these hairs were for..."

“Sir... Nott’s in the broom cupboard, I could get him... And I have the memory of Malfoy’s plan. Surely you have enough evidence to question him...” Harry asked incredulously.

“You would have me arrest them then?” Dumbledore asked patiently.

“Well question them at least... we were just talking about zombies and bringing people to the brink of death....” Harry reminded the man.

“You are quite correct, I do not fault you for taking this threat seriously... but let me ask you Harry... Can you be certain these are all the hairs Mr. Malfoy has in his possession?”

Harry paused...

“If I were to interrogate Mr. Nott or maybe even derive what his purpose in this little plot was, what would stop Mr. Malfoy, or even Voldemort to simply pick up where he left off? I suspect Mr. Malfoy does not even have all the hairs or information on the plot... he is most likely, simply acting as a scavenger for Tom....”

“Scavenger...?”

“Yes, in the last war, Tom had been known to collect as many samples of hair, and other pieces of wizards and witches, as possible... Those who went in search of these samples were referred to as scavengers... collecting the samples before the now standard cleaning charms vanished them. His followers or even he himself could simply transform into anyone, no one was above suspect. The scavengers had done so thorough a job, I fear Tom had at least one hair from almost every Wizard or Witch in the country over the age of thirty.”

“I myself have been spotted in areas I do not recall ever being... I have gone to great lengths to keep any samples from being obtained, but I’m afraid Tom has quite a few of my own locks of hair hidden somewhere. You as well I’m afraid... More than likely.” Dumbledore stated reluctantly.

Harry stared at Dumbledore, horrified. He didn't like the idea of his face masking any death eater as they strolled freely amongst alleyway's and crowded streets.

Would his face be the last some random innocent saw, before they were struck down or tortured?

"I believe the most prudent course of action would be to let Mr. Nott be as is... see what he will attempt to do. Will he go to Mr. Malfoy and admit his loss, what would Mr. Malfoy's response be...? Voldemort's as well..." Dumbledore explained.

"While I'm sure their plan will change slightly with what has already happened... it will buy us time."

Seeing where Dumbledore was going with this... Harry nodded, trusting his judgement in this matter.

"For now, I have already signalled order members to spy upon Mr. Malfoy and Nott. I myself will have these hairs tested to ascertain the identity of each sample... I will notify you of my findings as soon as I have them. Is that acceptable?"

"Yes sir... Thank you sir..." Harry said pleased that action was being taken. Knowing that something was being done and knowing what was being done were two very different things... Harry was very comforted with the knowledge he was given.

Standing up to leave at his obvious dismissal... Harry made his way to the door before being stopped once more.

"Oh and Harry..."

Turning around, Harry stared at the headmaster curiously.

"Please refrain from rendering anyone else unconscious and locking them in any other enclosed spaces in the castle... I do not wish for this to become a habit with you..." Dumbledore admonished amusedly, clearly remembering the last time Harry had done something similar.

... ..

It had been almost another week since the incident. The day after, Harry had sat with Luna at the Ravenclaw table, on the Slytherin side. Malfoy had entered red faced and decidedly grumpy. Nott a few moments later, The stunner having released sometime into the night. He seemed oddly paranoid, though one had to really look to notice.

They did not talk to each other in such a public place, and when checking the map, the boys were rarely seen in each others presence without a few other students near by.

Harry personally couldn't see why they didn't just meet in the Slytherin dorms after hours rather than a random hallway. Or why not wait till Hogsmead weekend and go off away from the other students to talk. It was sloppy...

Harry's attention though could not remain solely on boy's no matter how much he wanted it too.

The History OWL retake was days away. Despite Ron's advice, Harry found himself studying the subject as much as he could falling behind in his potions and Runes work.

He had even mailed Remus hoping the man might have his own notes handy, His Runes notes being so thorough and helpful...but Remus sadly replied that it would take him time to find them, as much of it was buried away in a storage locker on the other side of town. Harry had mailed back telling the man not to bother but thanked him none the less.

Harry had considered asking Hermione for her notes, but it felt wrong for obvious reasons.

Luna couldn't help him having dropped the subject in second year, and the only other source of information he could think to ask were his dorm mates.... Many of whom had tossed or shredded said notes the first chance they got.

As the Day finally arrived, Harry found himself very highstrung, He was given the Day off classes for it as thankfully the teachers weren't that cruel to make him attend when he had to write a major wizarding test in a few hours.

It took all of Harry's will power not to stun Seamus when he had hummed a funeral march as he exited the great hall.

Arriving in Professor McGonagall's office, Harry was directed to a lone seat by his head of house. She told him that the examiner would arrive soon and soon left herself as she attended to her own class.

Almost as soon as the women had left, the fireplace erupted in green flames, and two men popped out with varying degrees of grace. Startled Harry stood as well though not knowing what to do once he had...

One was the familiar Headmaster, his long beard hanging jauntily from the elderly face, the other, a tall, frail, older man, with a large bald spot, complete with comb over, and a choked wheeze as he exited the fire.

Dumbledore patted the man on the back as he belched out what appeared to be remnants of the floo system.

Dumbledore's eyes wandered as he gave the man a few more gentle pats and fell upon Harry.

"Ah Harry, Prompt as usual. I'd like you to..." He was interrupted by a particularly pronounced wheezing cough from the man. Harry cringed a little at the pained sounds.

"... To Professor Abernackle. He was my own History Professor, succeeded by Professor Binn's." Dumbledore introduced with a jovial smile.

The man certainly seemed ancient enough to have taught Dumbledore... and well on his last leg if that cough was any indication.

Deciding not too voice that thought Harry plastered on a respectful smile and stepped forward with his right hand.

“It’s nice to meet you Professor...” Harry greeted; his hand extended patiently.

While giving one final cough, tilting his head to the side, Abernackle reached out and firmly grasped Harry's Hand.

Harry was surprised by the strength of the man’s stubby little fingers. Abernackle finally clear of the powder turned his attention fully to the boy.

“A pleasure Mr. Potter...” The man greeted cheerfully. He had a slightly falsetto voice, oddly complimenting his frail frame.

The man’s eyes latched on to Harry’s forehead like so many others, but other than that slight sign of recognition, he said nothing more; turning his attention to Dumbledore instead.

“Now seems like a good time, no need to dilly dally. I will meet you in your office afterwards...” Abernackle asked pleasantly.

Dumbledore complied with a respectful smile. “It would be a pleasure; The Password for today will be Toffee Tarts.”

It was strange to witness but Abernackle seemed to be directing Dumbledore... Much like Professor Flitwick might direct anyone of his students. There appeared to still be remnants of the student professor relationship between the two. An oddity in itself considering who Dumbledore was.

Turning his attention to Harry, Dumbledore spared a comforting and encouraging smile...

“Good luck Harry, I’m sure you’ll do splendidly.” With one last parting glance Dumbledore excused himself, leaving Harry with the stranger.

“Well Mr. Potter, How are you fairing... Ready for your OWL?” Abernackle asked pleasantly as he motioned for Harry toward a seat.

“Hopefully...” Harry stated with a smile.

“Yes... that seems to be way of things now a days.” Abernackle chuckled amusedly.

Sitting down, Harry waited as Abernackle ruffled through his papers that had ‘magically’ appeared out of no where.

Pulling out a booklet and a familiar red quill... He placed the items in front of Harry.

“Right then Mr. Potter, You will have two and a half hours to complete the exam, the same format as the last one I believe. Do you have any questions?”

“No sir...”

“Alright then... When I say begin you may start.”

Pulling out a watch, Abernackle waited a few moments...

“... and begin.”

... ..

“How’d you do?” Ron asked as Harry wandered into he common room.

“I have no idea.”

The exam had been tough... Harry doubted he would have done better if he had more time to study. He had to skip quite a few questions, as he had no idea what to write in.

But Harry did think he did slightly better than last time.

“Probably a Pass... I doubt it’s an EE or anything.” Harry answered.

Overall he was just glad it was over finally.

“Oh here...” Ron said suddenly. Reaching over the couch he had been laying on he dug into his back pack and pulled out his notebook.

“Here you go... No homework from Tonks but Flitwick wants us to be able to start researching the protean charm.” Ron explained.

Harry took the notes thankfully and opened the book; cringing at the chicken scratches that were Ron’s class notes.

Putting the book aside for later perusal, Harry groaned to himself as he realized he would have to get caught up in potions and start studying Runes much more diligently. He didn’t want to be caught unawares when some one finally came to quiz him.

Both boys were interrupted from their thoughts though by a multitude of giggles that were quickly approaching.

Raising his head carefully like a gazelle checking the serengetti for predators, Harry spotted the source of the noise.

Ron had flattened himself against the couch instinctively as the hoard of girls varying from forth to fifth years walked by. All conspiring and swarming around one another like locusts.

Harry quickly averted his eyes as one girl turned to watch him staring. This had caused an upsurge in giggles before the swarm finally vanished up the stairway to the girls dorms.

“What was that?” Harry asked in confusion.

“They’ve been like that all day...” Ron said moodily, finally lifting his head now that the giggling noise had vanished.

“Why... ?” Harry asked in morbid curiosity.

“Lavender mentioned that Some boy had asked her to go to Hogsmead for Valentines Day... Stupid wanker...” Ron grumbled.

“Valentines day?”

"February 14... you know... frilly decorations, lots of cards, the female population becomes just a tad more unhinged..." Ron reminded.

"What day is it?"

"The twenty ninth..." Ron stated.

"Crap..." Harry stated with renewed sorrow.

Harry realized that he now had to plan something for Luna... Would she want to go to hogsmead with everyone else... Did she expect Candy, and flowers and gifts...

Relationships seemed like more trouble than they were worth...

Ron seeming to have read Harry's mind smiled a crooked smile.

"You going to take Luna out for Tea?" He asked mockingly.

"Shut it..."

"You know... if you do your transform thing and put on a diaper..." Ron said significantly... wagging his eyebrows suggestively.

"I will bury you... I will dig a hole and bury you alive.... No one will find you..." Harry threatened.

If anything, Harry's threat seemed to only encourage the boy.

"You know that's not a bad idea... People could pay you to deliver messages and to shoot people in the ass with fake arrows." Ron advised.

Giving the boy a death glare Harry suddenly had an idea...

"You know... I could send an arrow to Hermione for you then..."

Ron's wide grin suddenly twisted into something unpleasant.

"I don't know what you're talking about..." The boy said uncomfortably.

"No it'll be great.... I'll make an arrow just for you..." Getting up in his seat, Harry concentrated hard on a mental image.

With the mental image firmly in mind Harry started to conjure a ludicrously unrealistic Bow.

A pink frame, with a Feathered end in the shape of giant puffy heart.

The head of the arrow was a giant red sucker...

"What do you think...?" Harry asked mockingly.

Blushing the boy just scowled at Harry.

Feeling some sympathy for the boy he sat down opposite him.

"Well are you going to ask her then...?" Harry asked

"Ask her what..." Ron asked stubbornly.

Rolling his eyes at the boy...Harry just sighed.

"You know... if you don't ask her now, someone else might... it would be like forth year all over again..." Harry warned.

Ron refused to say anything but he spared Harry a glance at his warning.

"Well it's up to you... but if you don't ask her soon, I'll permanently stick this arrow to your arse..." Harry warned lightheardedly.

Ron turned immiedietley... at the threat. " You wouldn't..." He stated defiantly.

Harry gave the boy a mocking stare. Getting upHarry made his way to the stairwell to the boy's dorm.

Absently he asked outloud...

"I wonder if I can get the Arrow to recite Poetry?"

AN: This is the last sucky chapter, I promise... I kind of wrote myself into a dead end so I had to tie up some loose ends.

I do want to tease you lot though... I left a little plot trick here somewhere... It should be obvious but easy to overlook. Let's see if you guys can figure it out.

Something I forgot to mention before. The bird toy from the previous chapter was a reference to an actual toy. A Tim's bird. Look it up on google if you want to see it. It actually does fly by flapping its wings. I was looking at it as I wrote the last chapter.

I'm finally going to step up my other side plots as I got to tie them up for this story. You'll notice that the time line is moving fairly fast. That's because I want to get to the last chapter fairly quickly. That's where the plot really kicks in. I would have written Valentines day in this chapter but it didn't feel right to include it in this chapter so I left it out.

Anyway till next time.

Quazi

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